



## Sebelius Admits ObamaCare Roll-out “Terribly Flawed”

According to former Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, the timeline for the ObamaCare rollout was “flat-out wrong.” Clearly more comfortable speaking honestly about the healthcare program now that she has resigned her position, Sebelius admits that the federal exchanges would have benefited from “more time and testing” before officially going online.

Sebelius announced her resignation on April 10, following the disastrous rollout of the exchanges and the deadline to sign up for health insurance.

Fox News reported, “The departing secretary said she decided after the 2012 presidential election that she wanted to leave the administration but decided to stay through the sign-up period. Sebelius said she gave her resignation in March and that Obama did not try to convince her to stay through the end of his term.”

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Appearing on NBC’s *Meet the Press*, Sebelius explained, “I thought it was fair to either commit until January of 2017 or leave with enough time that he would get a strong, competent leader. I made it pretty clear that it really wasn’t an option to stay on.”

President Obama had kind words for Sebelius on Friday when he addressed her resignation: “Under Kathleen’s leadership, her team at HHS turned the corner, got it fixed, got the job done,” he claimed in a Rose Garden ceremony Friday morning. “And the final score speaks for itself.”

Critics say the president’s praise of the leadership of Sebelius is believed to be a facade, however, as White House aides report that Obama blamed her for the disastrous roll-out. Sebelius remains an advocate of the healthcare law, and has even accepted blame for most of the problems. “You deserve better,” she said in a press conference last October. “I apologize. I’m accountable to you for fixing these problems and I’m committed to earning your confidence back by fixing the site.”

Months later, however, with her resignation now public, Sebelius is seemingly no longer willing to take complete blame for the problematic roll-out.

During her appearance on *Meet the Press*, Sebelius admitted, “Clearly, the estimate that [the website] was ready to go October 1 was just flat-out wrong.”

Though she asserted that ObamaCare has provided millions of people access to healthcare, she added, “I think there’s no question — and I’ve said this many times — that the launch of the website was terribly flawed and terribly difficult.”

Sebelius also stated that trying to meet the president’s December 1 deadline to have the website repaired was a harrowing experience. “If I had a magic wand and could go back to mid-September and ask different questions based on what I know now, [I would],” she said. “I thought I was getting the best information from the best experts, but clearly that didn’t go well.... Could we have used more time and





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testing? You bet.”

Of course, these statements by Sebelius only confirm what critics and technical experts have said all along about the healthcare website.

On October 24 the House of Representatives opened a series of hearings during which the House Energy and Commerce Committee [questioned](#) the website’s technical issues.

Appearing at that committee hearing, Cheryl Campbell, senior vice president of CGI Federal (a subsidiary of CGI Federal that developed the back-end administrative software for healthcare.gov), stated that the Obama administration bears responsibility as the “systems integrator or quarterback on this project.” She also indicated that confusion among tech firms, and high demand for health insurance, led to site problems.

Lawmakers raised a number of questions regarding the launch of the website. When the tech contractors were asked by House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-Mich.) whether they recommended to the president that the October 1 launch of the website be delayed, they indicated that it was not up to them.

“It was not our decision to go live,” Campbell said, adding that such a decision would have rested with the CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services), the agency in charge of leading the project.

Campbell also stated that another contractor was responsible for the technology that allowed users to create new accounts — technology that she said caused the initial issues on the site. She called those glitches a “front-door problem.”

Responding to questions about whether the website was tested, Campbell said it was done throughout the process of building HealthCare.gov. She said CGI’s portion of the site worked when it was tested, but when it was integrated into the entire system, it failed to work. She added that the contractors would have preferred more time to test the technology.

Andrew Slavitt of Optum/QSSI (software and IT subsidiaries of United Health Group) also testified that contractors’ concerns, many of which had to do with testing, were shared with CMS officials. “We did fully talk about the risks that we saw, and we passed them along,” he stated.

The failed ObamaCare website provoked ire amongst lawmakers, who begrudged the cost of a site that simply was not up to the task. “HealthCare.gov is an unmitigated, \$400-million disaster,” declared Rep. Phil Gingrey (R-Ga.) following its launch. He continued,

Deadlines have been repeatedly missed. The databases that store sensitive medical and financial information aren’t secure. Those attempting to enroll in health care exchanges have been unable to do so due to technical “glitches.” Worse still, these same individuals will be slapped with a penalty tax for being uninsured. If the federal government is unable to manage this website, how can they possibly manage our country’s health care system?

The site was designed to serve as many as 50,000 people per hour, an embarrassing figure as the Obama administration expected millions upon millions of Americans to be accessing it.

On Friday the president nominated Sylvia Mathews Burwell, his current director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), to replace Sebelius. Her nomination is not expected to face any notable resistance.

According to Obama’s Chief of Staff Denis McDonough, Burwell was chosen because she is “a proven



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manager” and “relentless implementer.”

As [observed](#) by *The New American’s* Bob Adelman, however, Burwell will “need every ounce of dedication and determination she can muster to implement the greatly flawed program.”



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