



Exposing the ‘Sabotage Obamacare’ Campaign in North Carolina

The Affordable Care Act benefits North Carolinian families, but state lawmakers are attempting to undermine it.

By The CAP Action War Room

The House Republican caucus has revealed its new playbook to undermine and sabotage Obamacare. Its tactics have changed, but its goal has not: to repeal the Affordable Care Act in its entirety.

The sabotage campaign is not happening only at the federal level. Republican lawmakers in some states are just as intent on sabotaging the law and making it more difficult for people to understand how to take advantage of the law’s benefits. Here are a few ways North Carolina lawmakers have worked to undermine Obamacare.

They gave back money that would have helped people learn how to get coverage. Earlier this year, the federal government awarded North Carolina \$74 million to help set up its own marketplace. When Gov. Pat McCrory (R) came into office, lawmakers decided to give that money back. Part of those funds, however, were slated for a multimedia public awareness campaign, in-person assisters, and outreach efforts to educate people about the new benefits offered under the Affordable Care Act and help them learn how to get covered. On top of that, the House Energy and Commerce Committee is sending letters to navigators, including the four navigators in North Carolina—Randolph Hospital, Mountain Projects, North Carolina Community Care Networks, and Alcohol Drug Council of North Carolina—in an attempt to intimidate the very organizations helping people find coverage. It is therefore not surprising when polls show people are confused about the law. In response to the navigator letters, Norm Ornstein, a resident scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, said, “Oversight would commonly mean that after a program has been implemented you look to see if it was done well and if there was fraud or malfeasance or misfeasance. This is intimidation and another effort at sabotage.”⁵

They have refused to expand Medicaid, leaving 318,000 North Carolina residents without affordable coverage. State lawmakers have refused to expand Medicaid. Not only would it provide access to health coverage to hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians, it is popular with the vast majority of the state. A Hamilton Campaigns poll found that two-thirds of North Carolinians support expanding Medicaid. Without the expansion, many of these working families will not have access to coverage. In fact, 318,710 North Carolinians may fall into a coverage gap because they make too much money to qualify for the program under its current eligibility but not enough to qualify for tax credits in the new marketplace.⁷

They have refused to set up their own marketplace. North Carolina is one of 27 states that have chosen not to set up their own marketplaces, instead requiring the federal government to set them up. Ned Barnett, an editorial writer at the *News & Observer*, wrote:

North Carolinians who buy insurance through the exchange will pay more because of the Republicans’ temper tantrum. The extra cost is a mix of hard and soft numbers. One hard number is 3.5 percent. That’s the percentage the federal government adds to premiums to cover its cost for running an exchange. If North Carolina had run its own, the cost could have been lower and broadly dispersed across the state’s tax base—an allocation from the general fund, for instance—with little or no effect on premiums.

More than anything, refusing to set up a marketplace shows how willing the state is to cooperate to make the law work and if they could take a more combative approach. We have seen that states—such as Kentucky, New York, and California—that want to make the law work are generally having better results than those that do not.

Instead of sowing more opposition and negativity, opponents of the Affordable Care Act would better serve the American people and North Carolina by working with lawmakers to find solutions to the problems. Unfortunately, they are only rooting for failure.

Center for American Progress Action Fund

THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT IS WORKING IN NORTH CAROLINA.

Even while Republicans in North Carolina try to undermine and sabotage the Affordable Care Act, it is working for middle-class families:

684,000 North Carolinians are eligible for a premium tax credit.⁹

95,000 young adults are able to stay on their parents' insurance.¹²

267,000 North Carolinians—66 percent—who currently have coverage in the individual market are eligible for some assistance to pay for health coverage.¹⁰

\$10 million in rebates have been sent to North Carolinians from insurance companies that initially charged too much.¹³

4,099,922 North Carolinians have pre-existing conditions and can no longer be denied care.¹¹

\$209 million saved by North Carolina Medicare recipients on their prescription drugs.¹⁴

Endnotes

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- 6 Gary N. Greenberg, "Absent Medicaid expansion, limited options for low-income Durhmites," *The Herald-Sun*, September 12, 2013, available at <http://www.heraldsun.com/durhamherald/x915048950/Absent-Medicaid-expansion-limited-options-for-low-income-Durhamites>.
- 7 Kaiser Family Foundation, "The Coverage Gap: Uninsured Poor Adults in States that Do Not Expand Medicaid" (2013), available at <http://kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/the-coverage-gap-uninsured-poor-adults-in-states-that-do-not-expand-medicaid/>.
- 8 Ned Barnett, "NC's cost of obstinance on Obamacare," *News & Observer*, October 5, 2013, available at <http://www.newsobserver.com/2013/10/05/3256323/ncs-cost-of-obstinance-of-obamacare.html>.
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- 10 Families USA, "How Does the Affordable Care Act Affect People Who Buy Health Insurance in the Individual Market?," November 21, 2013, available at <http://www.familiesusa.org/ACA-individual-market/>.
- 11 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "How the Health Care Law is Making a Difference for the People of North Carolina," available at <http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/facts/bystate/nc.html> (last accessed November 2013).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.