



Republicans Turn Against Their Own Health Reform Proposals

Ten GOP Ideas in the Affordable Care Act

November 9, 2010

Congressional Republicans are threatening to repeal the Affordable Care Act, the recently passed health care reform law. But President Barack Obama pointed out on “60 Minutes” Sunday night that the law is very similar to Republican Gov. Mitt Romney’s health reform law in Massachusetts. And it turns out the law reflects many other ideas that enjoyed Republican support in the past. Here are 10 of those ideas.

- 1. The Affordable Care Act is built on the same scaffolding as former Gov. Mitt Romney’s health reform approach in Massachusetts.** Both reforms create new coverage options through insurance reforms and Medicaid expansions, improve the affordability of coverage, and require shared responsibility for health care financing across individuals, employers, and taxpayers.
- 2. The new law requires all individuals to hold health coverage—an idea advanced by Stuart Butler and Ed Haislmaier of the Heritage Foundation as far back as 1989.** Other conservative scholars and Republican policymakers who have embraced the idea of shared responsibility include Mark Pauly, a health economist at the University of Pennsylvania; Sen. John Chafee; a group of the health care law’s cosponsors—including Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT)—who introduced similar legislation in 1993; and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney.
- 3. The Affordable Care Act requires health insurers to pool the risk of small businesses and individuals through the health insurance exchange—thus giving them greater bargaining power and better rates.** Enabling individuals, small businesses, and trade associations to band together and obtain better prices was a key plank in the House Republican leadership’s “Solutions for America.”

4. **The Affordable Care Act gives young adults new coverage options.** These include staying on their family coverage through age 26 just like the proposal the House Republicans offered during the health reform debate.
5. **Employers may automatically enroll their workers in health insurance.** This was proposed by the Republican Study Group and the House Republican leadership during the health care debate last year.
6. **Employers may use premium incentives and other tools to encourage workers to participate in a range of workplace wellness programs.** This idea enjoyed widespread Republican support. Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE), the Republican House leadership, and the Republican Study Committee introduced proposals during last year's health care debate. A bipartisan group of senators led by Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) also championed this approach in the Senate HELP Committee.
7. **States may use federal funding to experiment with medical liability reforms.** This is similar to the proposals advanced by Sens. Mike Enzi (R-WY), Richard Burr (R-NC), and Tom Coburn (R-OK), and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) during the reform debate.
8. **Families and businesses may purchase coverage across state lines.** This was an idea shepherded by Rep. John Shadegg (R-AZ) and others, including the House Republican leadership, during the health care debate.
9. **States may pursue their own approaches to health reform as long as they can provide equivalent or better coverage at a comparable or lower cost.** The House Republican leadership championed state innovation in their alternative proposal to health reform.
10. **The Affordable Care Act establishes high-risk pools that provide access to health coverage for those who generally are unable to find affordable insurance in the individual market, particularly those with a preexisting condition.** This is an idea Republicans endorsed in their alternative proposal.