

THE SUN

Ehrlich distorts the facts about Obamacare

By: Mike Claxton – May 29, 2013

As is often his wont, Robert L. Ehrlich Jr.'s recent column on Obamacare provided a very one-sided narrative using gross generalizations and failing to provide context for his arguments ("Lost jobs, higher costs: Obamacare hits home," May 26).

Mr. Ehrlich notes that landmark legislation typically passes Congress with some degree of bipartisan support. However, the examples he provides were all approved more than 48 years ago, at a time when many elected officials strove to do what was best for their constituents and the country.

That's a far cry from the main goal of today's Republican Party, as stated by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who said "the single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president."

Since that didn't work out for Republicans, they are now going to try ensure that the president doesn't get any political "wins," as was noted by GOP Sen. Pat Toomey when the bill he co-sponsored on firearm background checks failed in the Senate.

"In the end it didn't pass because we're so politicized," Senator Toomey said. "There were some on my side who did not want to be seen helping the president do something he wanted to get done, just because the president wanted to do it."

So much for bipartisanship.

Mr. Ehrlich mentions several things he sees as faults with the ACA and makes reference to "numerous surveys." Since he did not cite any of them I can only assume they are the same reports and documents typically used by Republicans that are sponsored by conservative organizations such as the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute and others, which are hardly unbiased.

The data and "facts" in these studies must be taken with a shaker of salt at best. Many of these "facts" can best be described as scare tactics, which Mr. Ehrlich and his colleagues have made part of their repertoire.

On the other hand, what Mr. Ehrlich doesn't mention are the 43.8 million newly insured citizens, including those who could not previously obtain insurance due to pre-existing conditions.

Nor did Mr. Ehrlich report that, according to the Department of Health and Human Services, "the rates of health spending growth marked the lowest rate in the 51-year history of the National Health Expenditure Accounts."

Let's pretend the Supreme Court did not find the ACA constitutional. What would be the effect of repealing the ACA?

Other than millions of Americans becoming uninsured, the Congressional Budget Office (a nonpartisan agency that provides impartial cost estimates and other analyses) noted in a letter to House Speaker John Boehner that "assuming that H.R. 6079 (Repeal of the ACA) is enacted near the beginning of fiscal year 2013, CBO and JCT estimate that, on balance, the direct spending and revenue effects of enacting that legislation would cause a net increase in federal budget deficits of \$109 billion over the 2013-2022 period.

"Specifically, we estimate that H.R. 6079 would reduce direct spending by \$890 billion and reduce revenues by \$1 trillion between 2013 and 2022, thus adding \$109 billion to federal budget deficits over that period," the letter concluded.

Since Mr. Ehrlich seems so fond of bipartisanship, why doesn't he urge his colleagues to work with their peers across the aisle and with the administration to do what is right for the American public — and not only on health care but also on immigration, gun safety, infrastructure and unemployment?

This doesn't mean that there wouldn't be disagreements. They don't all have to hold hands and sing "Kumbaya." However, it does mean there would be an honest discussion, not simply rejecting proposals you have supported in the past just because the administration is for them.