



Affordable Care Act Becomes a Source of Heartburn

By: Jennifer Wishon – May 28, 2013

A new CNN survey shows most Americans are still opposed to President Obama's health care reform.

Of those polled, 54 percent say they are against Obamacare while about 43 percent support the law. Those numbers are relatively unchanged since Congress passed the law in 2010.

And even though it's set to take effect next year, nearly half of Americans don't know the law still exists.

The Affordable Care Heartburn?

The Affordable Care Act is supposed to create jobs and provide health insurance for all Americans who want it -- and save money. Instead, for many Americans it has already become a source of heartburn.

"This is legislation that was 2,500 pages long (that is) now 20,000 pages of legislation," the Cato Institute's Michael Tanner said.

That's 17,500 pages of new regulations written by bureaucrats on top of an already complex law passed by Congress.

And for employers who have no choice but to understand the 'nitty gritty' details to make decisions for their companies -- the task is overwhelming.

"For example, the employer mandate, the requirement that businesses with 50 or more full-time equivalent employees provide health insurance or pay penalties...that was a three-and-a-half page provision that got turned into 144-page regulation with 44 definitions," Kevin Kuhlman with the National Federation of Independent Business said.

One study predicts Obamacare will put more than 3 million jobs in jeopardy. For now, however, confusion and uncertainty about the law is stifling economic growth.

"So there's a lot of heartburn and a lot of nervousness about what exactly the increased costs will mean for their bottom line," Kuhlman said.

The president maintains Americans who like their insurance plan, can keep it. But that's turning out not to be the case.

According to a study of 11,000 plans on the individual market, less than 2 percent comply with Obamacare requirements, meaning 98 percent of plans must change or the people using them must find new plans.

Also, the Congressional Budget Office now estimates Obamacare will result in 7 million Americans being dropped from their employers' health plans and forced into new health exchanges set up by the law.

While it's true more Americans will have health insurance under Obamacare, that will lead to greater demands on the health care system and therein lies another problem.

"We know that the government's own chief actuary says that about 15 percent of hospitals will close as a result of this because they're no longer viable," Tanner told CBN News.

Still, even after all 20,000 pages of regulations are implemented - not all Americans will be insured.

The CBO estimates by the year 2023, 30 million Americans still won't have insurance. By that time, America will have spent nearly \$2 trillion implementing the law.

"We're spending a lot of money and helping relatively few people," Tanner said. "In many ways it probably would have been simpler and cheaper just to give everybody money to buy insurance."

Obamacare gives extraordinary discretion to the secretary of health. Some 1,000 times the law states "the secretary shall determine" - that's how the rules and regulations in the law keep growing.

The law is so complex, some wonder if it will be ready to be fully implemented on schedule in January. Health Secretary Kathleen Sebelius says it will, but many others doubt it.

Even some Democrats are now quietly worried that not only will it be tough to get Obamacare to work; it could become a political liability for them in next year's elections.