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The truth about Obamacare exchanges

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In a recent piece for this paper, I explained how Obamacare has made it safer than ever for healthy people to drop their coverage then wait until they get sick to re-enroll, and how this perverse incentive could erode Obamacare's enrollment numbers and even cause the law to implode. A subsequent report by congressional investigators confirms this concern. It found only 67 percent of those who signed up for coverage through healthcare.gov have actually paid their first premium.

Writing in the Los Angeles Times, Michael Hiltzik does not take kindly to such talk. He calls my piece lame, dopey, scary and ghoulish.

It's funny, though. Hiltzik attacks the piece not because what I say about Obamacare is false, but because it's true. He validates almost every point I make in the column: that prior to Obamacare, being uninsured was already a lower-risk proposition for most healthy people, and that Obamacare has taken that risk and made it even smaller. Hiltzik even bolstered my argument by noting additional ways Obamacare allows people who dropped their coverage to re-enroll quickly if they fall ill.

Hiltzik attempts to shoot the messenger when he writes that I belong "squarely in the disreputable camp of conservatives who advise Americans not to sign up for Obamacare because there's no downside to going without coverage." The first two claims are false for the same reason. I'm a libertarian, not a conservative, and, as a good libertarian, I don't tell other people whether they should buy health insurance or not. The third claim is false because I never have argued there's no downside to being uninsured. Of course there is. My argument is that Obamacare has dramatically reduced the downside. I'm sure Hiltzik agrees.

I want everyone to have access to secure, affordable health insurance, which is why I chose to warn Angelenos about the dangers Obamacare's perverse incentives create for everyone's health

insurance. I wish Hiltzik got as upset with the people who created those dangerous incentives as he gets with people who draw attention to them.

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