

TIME

Aetna Has Revealed Obamacare's Many Broken Promises

The recent exodus of insurers shows we need more reliable affordable care

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They're dropping like flies.

The health-insurance giant Aetna has announced it will exit 11 of the 15 health-insurance exchanges where it sells Obamacare plans. Aetna's announcement comes on the heels of news that UnitedHealthcare, Humana, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Mexico, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, and Texas' Scott and White Health Plan, and 70% of Obamacare's failed Co-Ops, and other insurers will exit many or all of the exchanges for which they had previously shown such enthusiasm.

The ongoing and nationwide exodus of insurers is just the latest piece of evidence that Obamacare is a failed law built on false promises.

Obamacare's only real selling point was that it supposedly guarantees access to care for people with expensive illnesses. President Obama repeatedly boasted that under Obamacare, it will be illegal for insurance companies to deny coverage to the sick because "all discrimination against pre-existing conditions will be prohibited."

On the contrary, Obamacare itself is denying coverage to people with preexisting conditions. Just ask the residents of Pinal County, Arizona, where Obamacare has driven *every* carrier out of the exchange, and may yet destroy the individual market outside the exchange.

As it turns out, Obamacare does not prevent insurance companies from denying you coverage, dropping your coverage, or watering down your coverage. It does not prevent insurers from limiting your coverage. It does not prevent discrimination against the sick. All of these things happened in Pinal County—and not in spite of Obamacare, but because of it. Obamacare made covering everybody in the exchange prohibitively expensive, so insurers stopped covering anybody.

If you're a Pinal County resident who had a pre-Obamacare plan that covered your (now-preexisting) medical condition, Obamacare took away your coverage and the long-term protection it provided. It has left you either with far more expensive coverage, or no coverage at all.

President Obama also promised Obamacare would give everyone "the same kind of choice of private health insurance that members of Congress get for themselves." Members of Congress can choose from four carriers in D.C.'s small business Exchange. (Who knew Congress is a small business?)

What about us little people? In 2017, one third of counties and one in six enrollees will have only one carrier in their Exchange. As it was before Obamacare, few Americans will have as many health-insurance choices as Congress.

President Obama repeatedly assured Americans: "If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period. No one will take it away, no matter what." This year's ongoing insurer exodus has so far added another 2 million Americans to the number that Obamacare has thrown out of their health plans.

In the same breath, Obama promised: "We will keep this promise to the American people: If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period." Can you guess what one of the worst parts of all those plan cancellations is? They often force patients to switch doctors and hospitals mid-treatment.

In 2010, Obama found one insurer who raised premiums by an "unacceptable" 39%. Obamacare would make such increases a thing of the past, he promised.

Are you sitting down? He hasn't kept that promise, either.

In 2016, eight states had Obamacare plans whose premiums increased by 39% or more. Half the states saw increases of 30% or more.

Premiums appear to be rising even faster in 2017. Across Tennessee's three exchange-participating insurers, the lowest average increase will be 44%. The highest will be 62%.

Obamacare's defenders respond that subsidies defray the cost of Obamacare plans. Except they don't. Subsidies don't reduce the amount of the premium. They just shift the cost of Obamacare coverage to taxpayers. Either way, fewer than half of consumers facing these premium hikes are getting subsidies.

For a great many people, including many with preexisting conditions, Obamacare has made matters worse. No one wants the system we had before Obamacare. But repealing Obamacare would create space for a sounder and more sustainable health reform than this ongoing failure.

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