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Why Are These Conservatives Waving The White Flag On ObamaCare?

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If the Republican's ObamaCare replacement plan ends up looking an awful lot like ObamaCare, here's one reason why: Prominent conservatives have already conceded defeat.

In his latest column, Charles Krauthammer declared that "For all its catastrophic flaws, ObamaCare changed expectations. Does any Republican propose returning to a time when you can be denied health insurance because of a pre-existing condition?"

Another well-known conservative commentator, George Will, wrote almost exactly the same thing in his column that just posted.

"It is unknowable whether Barack Obama produced an American consensus in favor of a government obligation to guarantee universal access to health insurance, or whether the debate surrounding the ACA merely catalyzed a gradually forming consensus," he wrote. "In any case, today's debate about replacing the ACA is occurring in the context of that consensus."

"Changed expectations"? "An American consensus"? After ObamaCare has been in effect for less than 39 months?

Yes, the "guaranteed issue" feature of ObamaCare polls well. A Cato Institute poll, for example, asked about support for "a provision of the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare, that requires insurance companies to cover anyone who applies for health insurance, including those who have a pre-existing medical condition?"

It found that 77% backed that provision, which is in line with what other polls have found.

But, like any treatment, "guaranteed issue" has side effects. And when presented with these side effects, the public's support for "guaranteed issue" collapses.

The Cato survey found that only 40% back guaranteed issue if it means increasing taxes. Only 35% back the reform if it means increasing premiums. And only 20% support guaranteed issue if it means lowering quality health care.

Well, guess what? These are *precisely* the harmful side effects that ObamaCare's guaranteed issue reform has produced. In fact, it's what every attempt to impose guaranteed issue on the individual health insurance market has produced. Whatever benefit guaranteed issue provides, it comes at a high price, which is why far more people say ObamaCare has hurt them than helped them.

Yet, for some reason, people like Will and Krauthammer, as well as the House GOP leadership, have decided to ignore the millions who are — thanks to this alleged new "consensus" — suffering these side effects in the form of higher premiums and facing higher deductibles for HMO-style health plans that strictly limit their access to doctors and hospitals. And that's to say nothing of the massive subsidy schemes needed to keep this government-run market functioning.

What's more, Will and Krauthammer apparently don't understand — although they should — that there are better ways to help those with pre-existing conditions than heavy-handed ObamaCare-style regulations, mandates and subsidies.

It's called the free market.

Let market competition work and insurance will become more affordable and higher quality without government subsidies. For the relative few who face costly, chronic diseases, don't have a job, aren't on Medicare or Medicaid or some other government program, and so must buy coverage in the individual market, they can be helped without putting the entire insurance industry under the federal government's thumb.

Krauthammer says that "the genius of the left is to keep enlarging the entitlement state by creating new giveaways that are politically impossible to repeal."

But the only reason ObamaCare appears impossible to repeal so soon after it went into effect is that conservative influencers like Krauthammer and Will are unwilling to put up a fight when it might actually count.