

## O-Care on line

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President Obama faces his toughest vote yet this week when the Supreme Court rules on his signature legislation: the controversial health-care law.

Democrats are trumpeting the expanded consumer protections and subsidies that make insurance more available and affordable.

Republicans have focused on what they call an unconstitutional requirement forcing people to buy health insurance and insist the law will burden businesses with its mandates and fines.

“No matter how the Supreme Court rules, this is going to be a seismic decision,” said Michael Cannon, of the right-leaning Cato Institute think tank.

“If they uphold the individual mandate [to buy insurance], if they strike down the individual mandate — either way, they will be defining the relationship between the government and the citizens for decades to come.”

In a memo to colleagues, House GOP Conference Chairman Jeb Hensarling (Texas) urged members to prepare for three possible rulings: a full repeal, a partial repeal involving only the mandate, or a law left intact.

House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), meanwhile, cautioned fellow Republicans against “spiking the ball” if the mandate is struck down.

When the court heard arguments about the individual mandate, Justice Antonin Scalia jokingly suggested that consumers could be made to buy broccoli because it is good for them.

Meanwhile, the White House and congressional Democrats are quietly planning for the possibility of at least a repeal of the mandate.

“We will be prepared,” White House senior adviser Valerie Jarrett told reporters last week. “We want to give the Supreme Court the room to make their decision.”

Jarrett said Republicans had mobilized a stronger campaign against the law and “distorted what we were doing early on.” She cited unfounded reports that “death panels” would decide who gets medical care.

Supporters insist that some of the protections are here to stay no matter what the court decides.

“I believe most Americans will say, ‘We’re never going to go back to those days where my child could be denied access to my health insurance because he or she has a pre-existing condition,’ ” Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.) told ABC’s “This Week.”

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