

## Supreme Court will take up Obama's Affordable Care Act

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The U.S. Supreme Court said Monday that it would weigh the legality of President Barack Obama's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in the first few months of next year.

The court will decide whether the health reforms can legally mandate Americans to purchase private insurance policies, among other items opponents have challenged. Appeals courts have largely split on whether the mandate is constitutional.

Most recently, the U.S. Appeals Court for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the mandate. “Despite questions raised as to our subject matter jurisdiction, we conclude we have jurisdiction, and we affirm the district court’s conclusion that the Act is constitutional,” Senior Circuit Judge Laurence Hirsch Silberman wrote.

The nation’s highest authority is expected to hear oral arguments on the case in March, with a decision to follow in the intervening months, virtually ensuring the reforms become a political football yet again before the November presidential election.

Ilya Shapiro, an expert on the court at the libertarian Cato Institute, in Washington, described health care as “the so-called elephant in the room,” overshadowing all other cases.

“This is definitely the issue of this term,” said Michael Carvin, a leading constitutional lawyer for the Jones Day firm in the U.S. capital and who has argued cases in the court.

“It could be the term of the century, or at least of the decade,” he said.

The health care legislation extended coverage to an extra 32 million people and fulfilled decades of Democratic dreams of social reform, but was fiercely contested by Republicans. The divisive policy has resurfaced as a key issue in the early stages of the campaign ahead of next year’s election.

*With AFP.*