



Democrats have doubts about Obamacare too

By: Brian Hughes – April 4, 2013

President Obama is eager to build public support for his health care overhaul in the few months remaining before its implementation, but waning enthusiasm from Democrats threatens his effort right out of the gate.

Two-thirds of Democrats now believe Obama's health care reforms will either hurt them personally or have no effect on their daily lives, a Quinnipiac University poll released Thursday shows. In comparison, just 27 percent of Democratic respondents said the reforms would help them.

The president has long struggled to convince independent and Republican-leaning voters that his health care blueprint would lower premiums and expand insurance coverage.

However, an inability to convince his own party that the reforms have merit suggests an even bigger problem for the president ahead of the 2014 implementation.

"Obama is trying to make the next election a referendum on Republicans," said Democratic strategist Doug Schoen. "But Obamacare will still be a drag on the Democratic ticket. Democrats supported it because Obama was attached to it, but they still have great skepticism about the real impact of the law."

Some Democrats are wary of the health care reforms because they don't go far enough. Party liberals had wanted a single-payer system run by the government. Others have complained about the repercussions of the law on part-time workers, some of whom have had their work hours cut so their employers could avoid mandates under the new law.

The reservations Democrats express aren't because they lack an understanding of what the reforms will do. Just 6 percent of Democrats polled by Quinnipiac said they didn't know how the reforms would impact them personally.

And analysts said that doubts from liberals represent more than a public relations problem for the president. They could signal difficulties ahead for his signature legislative achievement.

"There are two ways it hurts Obama," said Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. "Democrats won't be as likely to go out and fight for Obama again on this issue, and secondly, if this crashes and burns, they're going to turn on him."

The president insists that critics will ultimately embrace the reforms once they are enacted. But the foundation of the law is built on the premise that most people will enroll in it. If they don't, the participation pool would not be large enough to keep premium costs down, analysts said.

Not surprisingly, Democrats still have a more favorable view of the reforms than Republicans and independents.

Just 3 percent of Republicans and 15 percent of independents believe the president's overhaul will help them personally, the poll shows. Even worse for the White House, 68 percent of self-identified Republicans and more than a third of all independents said the reforms would hurt them personally.

However, Obama continues to paint a rosy picture of how people will benefit from the most comprehensive overhaul to the health care system since Medicare was created in 1965.

During a fundraising swing through California on Thursday, Obama said the reforms are "already helping millions of people and will help millions more when it is fully implemented next year."