

Off the Rails

Obamacare a 'train wreck,' according to bill's supporters

By: Lachlan Markay - April 18, 2013

Opponents of Obamacare on Thursday seized on warnings from two of its legislative architects that implementation of the law could be disastrous.

“I just see a huge train wreck coming down,” said Sen. Max Baucus (D., Mont.), who is chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and wrote large portions of the law.

Baucus’s admission came days after Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D., W.V.), who also helped craft the law, said, “it is just beyond comprehension.” Rockefeller called Obamacare “the most complex piece of legislation ever passed by the United States Congress.”

That complexity is making it extremely difficult to implement the law, according to Baucus and Rockefeller. Both say the law was well designed but is being poorly implemented.

However, Obamacare’s critics said problems in implementing such a complex law were inevitable.

“How hard was it to see that even the smartest government bureaucrats can’t competently plan something as complicated as America’s health-care sector?” asked Rep. Mike Pompeo (R., Kan.) in a Thursday letter to Baucus.

The warnings speak to the inevitable problems in trying to centrally plan an economic sector as large and complicated as health care, said Michael Cannon, a health care policy expert with the Cato Institute.

“The whole problem with Obamacare is this: the only people who can implement it properly are people who are competent enough to plan one sixth of the economy, and no such people exist,” Cannon said.

Pompeo and other members of Congress who fought Obamacare in its legislative stages or have worked to repeal it since then claimed the warnings by even the law’s most vocal supporters vindicate their opposition.

“Each one of these problems results from legislation you authored and your colleagues supported,” Pompeo wrote Baucus. “And yet many Republicans, at every step of the process, issued warnings and condemnations based on exactly these inevitable problems.”

Rep. Tom Price (R., Ga.), a practicing physician and member of the Congressional Health Care Caucus, said he “warned my fellow lawmakers time and time again of the terrible

consequences of a government takeover of health care—from diminished quality of care to skyrocketed costs.”

“Still, they persisted,” Price said. “Now, we are learning that these projections were true, as this law is hurting real Americans each and every day.”

Baucus told Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, the chief bureaucrat in charge of Obamacare implementation, that states and residents will have no idea how to comply with all of the law’s new provisions during a Finance Committee hearing on Wednesday.

Baucus said after the hearing the concern is “that consumers and businesses will just not have enough information. That it will be too confusing.”

Concern appears to be growing within the Obama administration.

“The time for debating about the size of text on the screen or the color or is it a world-class user experience, that’s what we used to talk about two years ago,” said one official at HHS’s Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at a recent conference.

“Let’s just make sure it’s not a third-world experience,” the official said of the law’s health insurance exchanges.

Those exchanges must be up and running by Oct. 1, but Baucus and others are skeptical that the administration will meet that deadline.

The increasing difficulties in implementing the law have some Republicans hopeful that they can do away with Obamacare simply by allowing it to collapse under its own bureaucratic weight.

Others, such as Heartland Institute health care expert Ben Domenech, say the administration should delay implementation of the law.

“It seems only rational to say that if implementation isn’t ready, it’s better to delay a year rather than push Americans into a system that isn’t ready,” Domenech told the Washington Free Beacon.

“The health care of Americans is too important to allow them to be crammed into a half-baked system, and the disruption created by such an approach could be massive,” he said.