

# The Washington Post

## A gloating GOP needs an Obamacare alternative

By: Jennifer Rubin- July 18, 2013

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Republicans on Capitol Hill are reveling in an embarrassing vote for the White House on health care. Today, President Obama is out campaigning for Obamacare; last night, huge bipartisan majorities in the House voted 264 to 161 (with 35 Democrats) to delay the employer mandate (legalizing what Obama did unilaterally) and 251 to 174 (with 22 Democrats) to delay the individual mandate.

Michael Cannon at the Cato Institute also notes:

*Unions are a key Democratic constituency, and many unions that once supported Obamacare are now screaming for Democrats to reopen the law. Last week, the Teamsters, the United Food and Commercial Workers, and UNITE-HERE wrote Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) that Obamacare “will destroy the very health and wellbeing of our members along with millions of other hardworking Americans.” Obamacare, they wrote, “will shatter not only our hard-earned health benefits,” but is already creating “nightmare scenarios” in which “[n]umerous employers have begun to cut workers’ hours,” leaving workers with “less pay while also losing our current health benefits.” In April, the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers, and Allied Workers called for “repeal or complete reform” of ObamaCare.*

You can understand why House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and other Republicans are touting the bipartisan opposition to the unpopular bill. In response to Obama’s declaration that he’d “blow through” the criticism, Boehner released a statement that read, in part:

*“The picture that the president paints of his health care law looks nothing like the reality facing struggling American families. They know that the law is turning out to be a train wreck. Not ‘fabulous’ or ‘wonderful.’ A train wreck. Nearly every major promise the president has made has been shattered. . . . The cost and complexity of the law are so great that the president had to give businesses an exemption from its mandates. Yet — unfairly — American families are not getting the same protections. Even the president’s allies in the labor unions have said the botched implementation of the health care law is leading to ‘nightmare scenarios.’”*

He’s right, but his conference needs to do more than vote to delay or repeal the noxious provisions. Without a GOP alternative to Obamacare, their complaints are empty and their votes unlikely to be taken seriously by voters. It is long, long past the point at which Republicans should have begun crafting and selling their alternative.

To be frank, other than the budgets, when it comes to complex legislation (the details of tax reform, health care, education) this House has been weak. Where is the tax plan? Where is the market-based health-care plan? And of course we know they’ve been sitting on the sidelines in the immigration debate.

The speaker this week sounded a wake-up call on immigration, imploring his colleagues to do something, at the very least, on the Dream Act front. He'd be wise to press them on health care as well. Without it, they weaken their own case against Obamacare and give the president the opportunity to say they've got no alternative.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) gave a lengthy and impassioned retort on the Senate floor to Obama's complaint that the GOP wants Obamacare to fail:

Mr. President, the plan is already failing. It's failing by your own admission. You have just had to cancel, you have just had to suspend, one of the critical components of this bill because it's not doable. This plan is already failing on its own. And, by the way, if you're going to accuse us of wanting ObamaCare to fail, you better accuse the Teamsters of it. Because they have the same criticisms on this point that I've raised here today.

Only at the very end did Rubio utter this: "We should do something, something that protects what's good about the current system and fixes what is bad with it." So how about it?

**UPDATE:** At the 9:30 mark in his floor speech Rubio does list a few ideas including flexible spending accounts, equal tax treatment for individually-purchased insurance and interstate insurance sales. It would behoove the GOP to put these ideas and others into an actual bill and champion it as their alternative to Obamacare.