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## Controversy on Obama health care bill to linger regardless of Supreme Court's ruling: experts

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Xinhua) -- The controversy over U.S. President Barack Obama's landmark health care reform bill is expected to remain no matter U.S. Supreme Court decides to strike down it or not, U.S. experts said.

The court will issue its ruling soon on whether to uphold the law, strike down the "individual mandate" that requires most people to buy health care, or invalidate all of Obama's signature health care legislation, which has sparked controversy ever since its passage into law in 2010.

Many experts predicted that the court would strike down the individual mandate as unconstitutional, on grounds that it violates the Commerce Clause of the Constitution, while leaving the rest intact.

Henry J. Aaron, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, stressed that whatever decision the court makes is not going to end the controversy over the bill.

"That's going to continue on until next year, unless the Supreme Court throws out the whole bill," Aaron said.

Indeed, writing in the Christian Science Monitor, Robert Reich, an official with former president Bill Clinton's administration, said that striking down the individual mandate might be just the first round.

If that happens, insurance companies could pressure lawmakers to scrap more popular provisions, such as the requirement for insurance companies to provide coverage regardless of pre-existing medical conditions.

Insurers, Reich contended, will claim that they can not afford to cover those with pre-existing conditions unless everyone is required to buy insurance.

Aaron said the bill could be sustained apart from the individual mandate, although it could lead to other issues the legislature would have to deal with in the future.

Ilya Shapiro, senior fellow in constitutional studies at the Cato Institute, said the Supreme Court is examining whether the individual mandate can be severed from the rest of the law, as some have argued that without the mandate, the rest of the bill will unravel.

Republican presidential challenger Mitt Romney has vowed to repeal the law, but that may prove a tall order, as Democrats will maintain control of the Senate after the presidential elections.

According to a Pew Research poll released Monday, the Supreme Court's ruling is unlikely to please Americans, no matter what it turns out to be.

The public's expected reactions track along partisan lines. Most Democrats would be happy if the law is upheld, while most Republicans would be happy if it is thrown out, the study found.

But the other widely discussed possibility -- that the court could reject the part of the law that requires individuals to have health insurance while keeping the rest -- does not satisfy either side. Among Democrats, 35 percent would be happy with this outcome, while 56 percent would be unhappy.

Republicans, who have consistently opposed the individual mandate, are not much happier - 43 percent would be happy if the court strips only this provision, while 47 percent would be unhappy, the study said.

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