



Updated: Tue., Jul. 20, 2010, 1:56 AM

The ObamaCare lies are still coming

By MICHAEL TANNER

Last Updated: 1:56 AM, July 20, 2010

Posted: 1:24 AM, July 20, 2010

Does President Obama have any idea what's in his own health-care reform law?

Since he signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act a bit more than 100 days ago, the president has given a number of speeches and interviews in which he continues to say things that, well, just aren't so. Just last Friday, he told MSNBC's Chuck Todd that the law "not only makes sure everybody has access to coverage but is reducing costs."

Wrong on both counts.

The bill doesn't come close to giving "everybody" access to coverage. According to the Congressional Budget Office, 10 years from now there will still be at least 21 million uninsured Americans. That's an improvement over today, but it's a far cry from the universal coverage that Obama once promised.

And nearly half of the newly covered aren't getting access to true health insurance but are being added to the Medicaid program, with all of its attendant problems of access and quality.

Indeed, access to health care may be about to get harder. The RAND Corporation reports that the new law may result in severe overcrowding and longer waits in emergency rooms.

Meanwhile, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services warn that some of the mandated cuts in Medicare could result in the closing of up to 15 percent of US hospitals.

We've already seen a near doubling in the waiting time to see a doctor under Massachusetts' universal health-care law, which is very similar to ObamaCare.

Even further from reality is the president's continued insistence that the new law is "reducing costs." In fact, the administration's own chief health-care actuary reports that the law will actually raise US health-care spending by \$311 billion over 10 years. This failure to control costs means that the law will add significantly to the already crushing burden of government spending, taxes and debt.

Accurately measured, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will cost more than \$2.7 trillion over its first 10 years of full operation and add more than \$352 billion to the national debt. This doesn't even include more than \$4.3 trillion in costs shifted to businesses, individuals and state governments.

Anyone who thinks that their insurance premiums will be going down in the foreseeable future is going to be disappointed. The law does nothing to restrain the growth in insurance costs. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office says that premiums will double over the next six years, roughly the same rate of increase as would have occurred without health-care reform.

Some workers can actually expect higher premiums. For example, according to RAND, younger and healthier Americans could see a rise of 17 percent. And the CBO says that workers who buy insurance on their own, rather than getting it via an employer, could see their premiums rise 13 percent faster than if the legislation had never passed.

Obama seems to have dropped one of his claims: the promise that if you have health insurance you like, you can keep it. Apparently, not even he could keep that one up with a straight face.

After all, just a couple of weeks ago, an internal memorandum leaked from the Obama Health and Human Services pointed out that more than two-thirds of companies could be forced to change their current coverage. For small businesses, the total could reach 80 percent.

Other reports have shown that seniors with Medicare Advantage and those workers with health-savings accounts are also likely to be forced out of their current plans. Even Americans whose plans are "grandfathered" under the law may still be forced to change coverage to a plan that meets government requirements if they make any material changes to their coverage.

As Mark Twain said, "It's not what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so." Words of which the president should surely be mindful.

Michael Tanner is a Cato Institute senior fellow and author of the Cato study "Bad Medicine: A Guide to the Real Costs and Consequences of the New Health Care Law."