

Obama to defend health care law's slow start

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President Barack Obama speaks in Statuary Hall on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, Oct. 29, 2013, during a memorial service for the late former House Speaker Thomas S. Foley. Foley was a 30-year veteran of the House who died last week at the age of 84. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

President Barack Obama is planning to defend his embattled health care law Wednesday in Massachusetts, pointing to the slow start of the state's bipartisan effort to launch a program that was a model for the national one.

There's been no such bipartisanship surrounding Obama's effort, particularly this month as the marketplace to allow individuals to buy health insurance went online with myriad technical problems.

Obama's White House legacy depends heavily on the success of his massive overhaul of the U.S. health care system, which has so far been a deep embarrassment. Republicans say the dysfunction is more reason to repeal the law, and they're pressing Obama administration officials for an explanation.

The president planned to speak about the embattled law Wednesday from Boston's historic Faneuil Hall, where then-Massachusetts Republican Gov. Mitt Romney was joined by the late Democratic Sen. Ted Kennedy to sign the state's 2006 [health care](#) overhaul bill.

An internal memo obtained by The Associated Press shows that the administration had expected nearly 500,000 uninsured people to sign up for coverage in October, the program's first month. But the senior administration official whose agency oversaw the enrollment website has forecast less impressive figures.

The White House said Obama planned to point out Massachusetts' sluggish start Wednesday. Jonathan Gruber, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology economics professor who advised both Romney and Obama on the development of their laws, said only 123 paying consumers signed up the first month of the Massachusetts law, with 36,000 coming on by the time penalties kicked in for failing to have insurance.

While more people did sign up as the deadline approached in Massachusetts, its law never faced high-profile computer woes or such fierce opposition. Even though the federal law was modeled on Romney's, the former governor ran for president against Obama last year on a campaign to repeal the federal version.

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