

Clinton adds to Obama's health care headache

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Bill Clinton weighed in on the crisis over the troubled new US health care law Tuesday, handing President Barack Obama a new political headache.

The former president said that Obama should stick by his promise that if Americans liked their existing [health insurance](#) plans they should be able to keep them, despite thousands being told by insurance firms they could not.

"I personally believe, even if it takes a change in the law, that the president should honor the commitment the federal government made to those people and let them keep what they've got," Clinton said in an interview with the OZY.com website published on Tuesday.

Obama last week said he was sorry to Americans who had been told by insurance firms that their coverage will be cancelled because of Obamacare, despite his repeated assurances that the law would not force people to change their doctors or insurance plans.

The White House says that the reason people have seen coverage cancelled is that their policies did not meet minimum quality standards required by the Affordable Care Act, known as Obamacare.

Officials say those people will be able to buy better policies under Obamacare and may qualify for tax rebates to help compensate for possibly higher costs.

Republicans seized on Clinton's comments, framing them as another disaster for the botched rollout of Obamacare.

The White House chose to highlight other assessments by Clinton about the law.

"I think it's important to note that President Clinton, in that interview, also said, and I quote, 'the big lesson is that we are better off with this law than without it.'" said White House spokesman Jay Carney.

Clinton and Obama had an initially frosty relationship, largely due to the current US leader's triumph over Hillary Clinton in their bitter 2008 Democratic primary race.

But Obama's choice of Hillary Clinton as his first-term secretary of state, and the valuable help offered by Clinton during the president's reelection campaign, brought the two Democratic champions together.

Carney also admitted on Tuesday that figures to be released shortly showing enrolment for the new scheme that debuted on October 1 would be disappointing, owing to the malfunctioning website.

"I can guarantee you that the number that is released will be lower than we had hoped and anticipated because of the problems with the website," Carney said.

"That is why it is so important to focus our energies on fixing the problems."

The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday that fewer than 50,000 people had signed up for private insurance as of last week—well below the administration's target of 500,000 enrollees for October.

Obamacare, which gets the United States closer than ever before to universal health insurance, is the president's signature domestic political achievement.

The White House argues that it includes many significant advances—including a prohibition on insurance firms barring coverage to those with pre-existing health conditions—and will be popular once it is fully implemented.

Despite Republican charges that Obamacare is a chaotic example of the folly of government intervention in the [health care](#) market, Obama allies insist that the website problems are distracting from the overall success of the law.

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