

Republicans stake out new attacks on 'Obamacare'

December 4 2013, by Michael Mathes

With President Barack Obama mounting a weeks-long offensive supporting the rebooted health care website, Republicans are lining up their own pre-election campaigns attacking the controversial law as disastrous for Americans.

Aside from continued legal challenges to the Affordable Care Act, critics are broadening their arsenal in the battle against the three-year-old law, as they expand on the debacle of the Healthcare.gov rollout to keep the controversy alive in the minds of voters.

The continued war on Obamacare will be played out across the airwaves and in congressional hearings—especially on the campaign trail, with top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell saying the [health care](#) law will likely be "the premier issue" of the 2014 congressional elections.

"You're going to hear about Obamacare from the Republicans for the next year, and you will hear about the [government shutdown](#) from the Democrats for the next year, and those competing messages and competing images for the Republican Party are what are going to shape people's choices in 2014," Duke University political scientist David Rohde told AFP.

Republicans have tried dozens of times to dismantle the law legislatively—all to no avail.

In October, they lost a bitter fight to cut into Obamacare during budget

negotiations, and the dispute led to the first government shutdown since 1996

The crisis emerged after far-right conservatives clashed with the Republican establishment over whether to force a dismantling of the [health care law](#) at the risk of paralyzing Washington.

Many Republicans are desperate to heal the party rift, and "the hatred for Obamacare is something that binds them together," Rohde said.

The latest strategy attacks Obama's pledge that Americans will be able to keep their doctor should they sign on to insurance through the health care exchanges.

House Speaker John Boehner said Tuesday that the "fundamentally flawed" law is "causing people to lose the doctor of their choice" and driving up the costs of their coverage.

Other Republican lawmakers took to the House floor this week, quoting letters from irate and scared constituents to hammer home the message.

Republicans hope the focus on doctors will maintain the momentum generated by both the disastrous October 1 rollout of Healthcare.gov and the oft-ridiculed Obama pledge that all Americans could keep their existing insurance.

With the Web portal beginning to stabilize, and about half a million people now "poised to gain coverage on January 1" through the exchanges, according to Obama, the Republican-controlled House held four separate hearings Wednesday in an effort to open new lines of attack on the law.

House Oversight Committee Chairman Darrell Issa, a fervent Obama

critic, said Obamacare's monumental change to how Americans get health coverage is "something that may be too big to swallow, even for the federal government."

Republicans say the law is hurting millions, notably those in the individual insurance market who have seen the cancellation of their coverage when it does not meet the new requirements under Obamacare.

But Democrats counter that more than 100 million Americans have already benefited from the law's preventive care requirements, like free mammograms or cancer screenings.

"The benefits of the Affordable Care Act for millions of women all across this country are so profound, and it seems unbelievable that Republicans in Congress want to spend their time defunding, devaluing and repealing" the law, said Democratic Representative Donna Edwards.

The president has launched his own offensive, planning several events between now and the year-end holidays to promote the [law](#) that even he has come to call Obamacare.

Obama told youth leaders gathered at the White House he would keep tweaking it as needed, but that it was here to stay.

"We're not repealing it—not as long as I'm president," Obama said.

"Particularly because the folks who are criticizing it don't seem to have any ideas in terms of how to reduce costs" or cover millions of uninsured, he added.

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