

Health law sign-ups growing but goal still elusive

February 13 2014, by Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar



In this Feb. 3, 2014 file photo, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius greets visitors after a news conference on enrollment in affordable health coverage in Cleveland. The Obama administration says about 1 million Americans signed up for private insurance under the president's health care law in January, extending a turnaround from early days when a dysfunctional website frustrated consumers. New numbers released Tuesday show nearly 3.3 million people signed up through Feb. 1. Although enrollment is gaining ground, the government's initial target of 7 million by the end of March still seems like a stretch. (AP Photo/Mark Duncan, File)

Wide disparities are emerging among U.S. states in health insurance sign-ups, according to an Associated Press analysis of federal enrollment statistics released Wednesday.

The Obama administration says about 1 million people signed up for private insurance under the [health law](#) in January, extending a turnaround from early days when a dysfunctional website frustrated consumers.

The new national numbers show that nearly 3.3 million people signed up from last Oct. 1 through Feb. 1.

The [health care law](#) is President Barack Obama's signature domestic achievement and officials in his administration are determined to make it work after a disastrous rollout in October. Opposition Republicans say the measure has many flaws and plan to criticize Democrats for them in election campaigns leading to congressional voting in November.

Although Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius says she's encouraged that the sign-up campaign is gaining ground, the government's initial target of 7 million by the end of March still seems like a stretch.

Also, officials are unable to say how many of those who signed up were previously uninsured—the ultimate test of Obama's hard-fought overhaul.

Beyond the stronger national numbers, the latest report shows huge differences and surprising twists at the state level.

Some Republican-led states whose elected officials strongly oppose the

law are keeping pace with monthly sign-up targets that the Health and Human Service Department established in September.

Some states where support for the law is strong are among the worst performers.

The AP's analysis compared the latest cumulative sign-up numbers for each state with targets spelled out in a Sept. 5 memo to Sebelius that the AP obtained months ago.

A dozen states have met or surpassed sign-up targets, including New York, Connecticut, Colorado, Florida, North Carolina and Wisconsin. The first three have Democratic governors. The latter three are led by Republicans, and the federal government has had to take on the role of running the new insurance markets there.

Surprisingly, the worst performers include four jurisdictions where Obama's [law](#) has strong support: Maryland, Massachusetts, Oregon and the District of Columbia.

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Citation: Health law sign-ups growing but goal still elusive (2014, February 13) retrieved 20 March 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-02-health-law-sign-ups-goal-elusive.html>

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