

White House in damage control on health care jobs report

February 4 2014, by Stephen Collinson

The White House jumped to parry new attacks Tuesday against Barack Obama's healthcare law, after a congressional watchdog warned it takes the equivalent of two million workers out of the economy.

The report, by the Congressional Budget Office, offered fresh ammunition to gleeful Republicans who said it proved their long-held argument that Obamacare, which they have repeatedly tried to repeal, would "kill" jobs.

But the White House pointed out that the data did not prove employers were cutting jobs or hours because of Obamacare.

It said that the CBO summary instead showed that some who stay in low paid jobs or put off retirement to keep health insurance plans linked to employers would no longer have to under Obamacare and could chose to leave the [work force](#) or toil for fewer hours.

"Claims that the Affordable Care Act hurts jobs are simply belied by the facts in the CBO report," White House spokesman Jay Carney said in a statement, which appeared just before the White House conducted a hurriedly organized call for reporters.

"Since the Affordable Care Act passed into [law](#) in March 2010 the [private sector](#) has added 8.1 million jobs," Carney said.

"That is the strongest 45 month job growth since the late 1990s and

contrasts with the 3.8 million private sector jobs lost in the decade before the Affordable Care Act passed."

Other officials said a healthier work force would lead to fewer sick days and higher productivity and that the law as a whole would have a stimulatory effect on the economy.

The non-partisan CBO report estimated that the ACA will reduce the total number of hours worked by between one and two percent during the period from 2017 to 2024.

It said the reduction will be driven mainly by low wage workers who chose to work less because of new taxes applying under the ACA and for other reasons.

The changes will amount to a roughly one percent reduction of aggregate labor compensation between 2017-2024.

That equates to around two million fewer full time workers in 2017 rising to about 2.5 million in 2024, the report said.

The CBO still projects total employment will rise over the coming decade, but believes it will do so less than it would have if Obamacare had not been passed.

Republicans seized on the opening.

"For years, Republicans have said that the president's [health care law](#) creates uncertainty for small businesses, hurts take-home pay, and makes it harder to invest in new workers," said House Speaker John Boehner.

"The middle class is getting squeezed in this economy, and this CBO report confirms that ObamaCare is making it worse."

Boehner's top subordinate, Republican House Majority leader Eric Cantor also weighed in.

"The CBO's latest report confirms what Republicans have been saying for years now.

"Under Obamacare, millions of hardworking Americans will lose their jobs and those who keep them will see their hours and wages reduced."

Democrats finally managed to squeeze Obamacare, the most sweeping social legislation in decades, through Congress in 2010.

The law brings America closer to universal health coverage than ever before and the administration says it has reined in the runaway increase in health care costs.

But Republicans say the legislation represents an unacceptable government intrusion into the private health care market and have voted to repeal the law more than 40 times.

Nevertheless, given the president's veto power, the law is safe for the rest of his presidency, and in effect, many of its provisions will be bedded into US life and the economy when he leaves office in 2017.

But Obama's attempts to win a political dividend from passing a law were hampered by initial malfunctions in the website set up to enroll Americans in the scheme.

His frequently repeated promise that if Americans liked their existing [health care](#) plans or doctors they could keep them under the new law meanwhile has been discredited.

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