

Obama cheers seven million health care sign ups

April 2 2014, by Stephen Collinson

President Barack Obama Tuesday cheered seven million people who bought into his health care law and lashed out at political foes who were "mad" that more Americans could get insured.

Obama savored a rare moment of triumph in his second term after the Affordable Care Act sign-up process defied skeptics and a rocky launch to hit its enrollment target ahead of a Monday deadline.

"Yes, at times, this reform has been contentious and confusing and obviously it's had a share of critics," Obama told a crowd in the White House Rose Garden.

"That's part of what change looks like in a democracy. Change is hard. Fixing what is broken is hard."

Obama, who has seen the early hopeful euphoria of his presidency drained by a fierce partisan battle with Republicans in Congress, insisted that the [law](#), for which he has paid a heavy political price, had cut costs and widened access.

"But this law is doing what it is supposed to do. It's working," Obama said.

He also took aim at Republicans who have made repeated attempts to repeal Obamacare, in line with a new White House narrative that opponents of the law now actively want to deprive Americans of their

new benefits.

"Why are folks working so hard for people not to have health insurance? Why are they so mad about the idea of folks having health insurance?"

Disastrous glitches

The White House said that a total of 7,041,000 people had signed up to plans in the new Obamacare private insurance market place after a late surge ahead of Monday's deadline.

The administration had initially set seven million enrollments as its target—but lost two months of sign-up time to disastrous glitches with the Healthcare.gov website late last year.

Few observers thought that a frantic administration effort to fix the site and reach out to potential customers at the grass roots would succeed.

White House spokesman Jay Carney said the seven million figure would rise as more late arriving data flowed into Washington from the states.

The successful late surge in enrollments was just the latest drama for a [health care law](#) that cost Obama and his Democrats a large chunk of their political capital, had to be upheld by the Supreme Court and foundered on deep divisions between Democrats and Republicans cleaving the United States.

Republicans to fight on

Republicans however vowed to carry on opposing a law they say has put undue pressure on small businesses, costs jobs and hiked costs for [health care](#) consumers.

"All across the country our constituents are having an unpleasant interaction with Obamacare," said Mitch McConnell, the top Senate Republican.

"Whether they can sign up for a policy or not, they are discovering, of course, higher premiums, a higher deductible," he said.

"Many of them are losing their jobs and so it is really a catastrophe for the country both for the healthcare providers and the consumers."

The law demands that all Americans have [health insurance](#) or pay a fine, but offers subsidies for the less well-off to sign up.

It could be months until the full success of the law, the most sweeping social reform in America in decades, can be gaged.

It is unknown how many young people have signed up—an important indicator since they are needed to subsidize higher costs of older, sicker patients.

If Obamacare pools skew too old, the cost of premiums could rise next year.

Also unclear is whether everyone who registered for a health plan actually paid for it.

Another unknown is what percentage of those signing up had no prior coverage—a key metric in assessing if the law helped 40 million Americans who lack insurance.

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