

US Supreme Court upholds Obamacare, preserves health care for millions

June 17 2021



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

The US Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a bid by Republican-led states to overturn Obamacare, safeguarding the health insurance of millions with the coronavirus pandemic still a threat in much of America.

In a 7-2 decision, the nation's highest court upheld the Affordable Care

Act (ACA), former president Barack Obama's signature [health care](#) program, ruling that Texas and the other 17 states did not have standing in the case.

President Joe Biden, who was Obama's vice president when the ACA was enacted, called the [court ruling](#) "a big win for the American people."

"With millions of people relying on the Affordable Care Act for coverage, it remains, as ever, a BFD," Biden said. "And it's here to stay."

"BFD" is a reference to a comment Biden whispered into Obama's ear at the 2010 ACA signing ceremony, when he said: "This is a big fucking deal." Biden's remark was picked up by live microphones.

The White House said this month that more than 31 million Americans currently receive their health care through Obamacare, which Republicans have unsuccessfully attempted to have thrown out in Congress and in the courts on numerous previous occasions.

Other Democratic lawmakers welcomed the [court decision](#).

"Thanks to the tireless advocacy of Americans across the country and the work of Democrats in Congress, the Affordable Care Act endures," said Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives.

"Despite every desperate right-wing attack to rip health care away from millions of Americans, the Affordable Care Act is constitutional and it's here to stay," said Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts.

"Now let's get to work to improve it so every American can get the care they need."

Former president Donald Trump had pledged to eliminate the ACA but his efforts repeatedly failed and he never presented an alternative.

'Lack the standing necessary'

Four of the conservative justices on the court—including two appointed by Trump and Chief Justice John Roberts—joined their three liberal colleagues in voting to uphold the ACA.

Conservative justices Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch, who was also appointed by Trump, were the dissenting voices.

Under the ACA, poor adults have access to the Medicare program normally open only to retired people over 65; young people under 26 can be covered by their parents' insurance; and people whose preexisting medical conditions led to their being denied commercial [health insurance](#) have coverage.

Attorneys for the Trump Justice Department and Texas-led states had argued that the entire ACA is unconstitutional because of legal questions over consumer penalties for people who do not obtain insurance.

"Hence, they believe the Act as a whole is invalid," Justice Stephen Breyer said in the opinion of the [court](#).

Breyer noted, however, that Congress had removed the penalties compelling people to buy insurance in 2017 and the plaintiffs could therefore not prove they had suffered any injury which would allow them to bring the suit.

"We do not reach these questions of the Act's validity, however, for Texas and the other plaintiffs in this suit lack the standing necessary to raise them," he said.

Obamacare has survived two previous Supreme Court challenges—in 2012 and 2015—and has grown in popularity among Americans over the years after a rocky start.

© 2021 AFP

Citation: US Supreme Court upholds Obamacare, preserves health care for millions (2021, June 17) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-06-supreme-court-obamacare-health-millions.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.