Obamacare Is on Life Support

By Phyllis Schlafly

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President Obama's eighth veto of his presidency came last Friday, when he quietly nixed legislation passed by Congress to repeal major portions of Obamacare. By allowing the crippled health care law to remain on life support for all of 2016, Obama and the Democrats handed Republicans a winning campaign issue for retaking the White House in 2017.

Officially named the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Obamacare's manifest failure is the primary reason why Republicans regained a majority in the House of Representatives in 2010 and the Senate in 2014. Along with even greater successes at the state level, Republicans now control more legislative chambers (and by wider margins) than ever before.

Bills to repeal Obamacare had previously passed the House, but this was the first time a major repeal bill has made it through the Senate using the process of "reconciliation" which requires a 51-vote simple majority. That's what made it possible to send the bill to the president's desk, but as House Speaker Paul Ryan admitted, "It's no surprise that someone named Obama vetoed a bill repealing Obamacare."

The bill would have stopped the expansion of Medicaid, ended the mandates on individuals and employers to buy health insurance, cut off federal subsidies, repealed the "Cadillac tax" on premium plans, and removed the taxes on medical devices. It also would have defunded Planned Parenthood.

Americans are understandably impatient at the slow progress toward repeal of this monstrosity, but our Constitution generally requires at least two elections to intervene before any major change can be accomplished. In order to pass Obamacare, Democrats first had to win both Houses of Congress in 2006 and then the White House in 2008, but they held a 60-vote margin in the Senate for just two months from the seating of Al Franken until the death of Ted Kennedy.

Enacted in 2010 without a single Republican vote, Obamacare's survival depends on the flow of billions of dollars to insurance companies for continuing to sell health plans they say they are losing money on. It's corporate welfare at its worst, as

health insurance companies have enjoyed record run-ups in their stock prices during the implementation of Obamacare, and pay their executives outlandish compensation packages worth tens of millions of dollars.

Half of Americans still oppose Obamacare and want it repealed, despite six years of promotion by the Obama Administration. More than half of the insurance co-ops established with billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies have gone out of business, abandoning nearly a million patients and leaving many physicians stuck with unpaid bills.

Many individuals have decided to incur a substantial tax penalty in 2016 rather than buy health insurance that would be even more expensive. The Obama Administration admitted that 10.5 million people have chosen to remain uninsured, spurning the opportunity to purchase coverage on Obamacare's insurance exchanges.

Meanwhile, health insurance costs are skyrocketing under Obamacare. The total cost of the premiums, co-payments, and deductibles is well over $10,000 per year for many healthy people, and the average premium increase for mid-level plans is a whopping 7.5% in just one year.

People are abandoning Obamacare insurance for reasons in addition to their astronomically high premiums. Patients face a lack of coverage for physicians who are not in their insurance plan's network, and patients who signed up for Medicaid are discovering that half of physicians do not even take Medicaid.

To many Americans, the penalty under Obamacare, upheld by a 5-4 vote of the U.S. Supreme Court in 2012 by calling it a "tax," seems like a bargain compared with the increasing cost of insurance. Millions of Americans choosing to pay the penalty are unlikely to support any presidential candidate who insists on continuing to impose and collect that tax.

The failure of Obamacare, and the need to repeal it, could become the winning campaign issue that ends eight years of control of the White House by Democrats. The more that Obama and Democrats cling to Obamacare, the more that Republicans should insist on its repeal.

While Obama's veto of this repeal was expected, the exercise proves that Obamacare can be repealed as soon as a Republican President takes office, hopefully

only twelve months from now. Democrats will not be able to filibuster a repeal of Obamacare in January 2017 any more than they could in January 2016, and Republicans have proved they can pass a repeal despite efforts to block it.

For seven painful years, Obama and Democrats have frustrated the will of the people by blocking repeal of the most unsuccessful legislation in American history. Republicans should look to what happened last year in Kentucky where Republican Matt Bevin was predicted to lose the race for governor, but after he made Obamacare an issue, he proved the polls wrong by winning in a near-landslide.

Phyllis Schlafly is a lawyer, conservative political analyst and author of two new books published in 2014, "Who Killed the American Family" and the 50th anniversary edition of "A Choice Not An Echo." She can be contacted by email at phyllis@eagleforum.org. To find out more about Phyllis Schlafly and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate website at www.creators.com.