

Trump Has Forfeited Obamacare for the GOP

Obamacare was always going to fail, primarily because it wasn't designed to succeed.



Contrary to President Obama's repeated promises over the years, the *Affordable Care Act* wasn't devised to allow Americans to keep their *old plan* or their *old doctor*. It wasn't crafted to bring down the cost of healthcare, or to lower premiums, deductibles, and copays. The plan wasn't to make health coverage affordable to the vast majority of Americans, and those who came up with the legislation certainly didn't have the concept of sustainability in mind.

In fact, one of its architects, Jonathan Gruber, admitted in 2013 that it was *purposely* written in a "tortured way" to conceal the bill's true ramifications on the American public. According to Gruber, the ACA would have never passed, had it not been for the "stupidity of the American voter."

We were outright lied to (over and over again) by President Obama and the Democratic party, and those lies affected the lives of each and every American.

I don't doubt that *some* Democrats in Washington had good intentions, back then, to help uninsured Americans gain health coverage. Those intentions paled in comparison, however, to the perceived prestige of a historical legacy – one they didn't think would come from addressing relatively small issues, like a pre-existing conditions clause (where there was

bipartisan support).

No, a *historical legacy* is earned through massive, sweeping change...even when the vast majority of the American public is happy with the current situation. A *historical legacy* is earned through transforming an *entire* system.

The Affordable Care Act was a social justice crusade, not a responsible plan for addressing a serious problem. And when it comes to *crusades*, the end *always* seems to justify the means – no matter how dishonest or impracticable those *means* are.

Even in the face of gross hyperbole and patently false rhetoric (from people who hadn't even bothered to read the bill), most Americans never bought into the con. Obamacare was deeply unpopular from the onset, requiring the bill to be passed through congress along strict partisan lines, using every dirty legislative trick in the book. The Democrats won, and the bill was signed into law.

As a result, people like me lost their doctors. We lost plans that we liked and could afford, because the law arbitrarily deemed those plans to be unacceptable. State exchanges have collapsed, and individual markets have been decimated. Here in my home state of Colorado, I have friends who now pay more for their monthly, high-deductible health coverage than they do for their home mortgages.

The numbers don't lie. In 2008, prior to the passage of the ACA, the average annual premium for families in employer-sponsored plans was \$12,680. This year, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, the average premium for a family is \$17,500 – nearly a \$5,000 increase.

It was reported this week (and confirmed by the White House) that insurers through HealthCare.gov will be raising next year's premiums by an average of 25 *percent*. That's more than *triple* the increase for 2016.

The staggering increase is being blamed on the long-predicted scenario of not enough young, healthy Obamacare customers enrolled in the system to support those who are older and ailing. The result has been a number of insurers dropping out, with the remaining ones struggling to cover the costs.

This situation, entirely of the Democratic party's making, is an absolute disaster. A lot of Americans are suffering today, because a group of politicians wanted to feel really great about themselves, instead of focusing on helping those who actually wanted or needed their help.

Even Bill Clinton recently called Obamacare "the craziest thing in the world."

Speaking at a rally in Flint Michigan, the former president said, "So you've got this crazy system where all of a sudden 25 million more people have health care and then the people who are out there busting it, sometimes 60 hours a week, wind up with their premiums doubled and their coverage cut in half."

He was right, and he ironically managed to do a better job of prosecuting President Obama's *signature achievement* than Donald Trump has throughout his entire campaign.

Just imagine if the Republicans had nominated a presidential candidate who:

1. understood this issue
2. pounded away at it every day
3. passionately articulated a realistic alternative (Paul Ryan has some ideas)
4. wasn't a vocal proponent of single-payer healthcare
5. was otherwise electable

Unfortunately, the GOP has forfeited that opportunity.

Instead of talking often and intelligently about the collapse

of Obamacare, and instilling confidence in its repeal and replacement, the party is perpetually doing clean-up work for a man who can't stop offending voters and raising new doubts about his temperament and competency.

Even when Trump attempts to address the health-coverage catastrophe, he ends up muddling the message. This morning, while speaking to a crowd in Florida, he apparently made up a story about all of his employees struggling with the Obamacare exchanges, before later stating that his corporation provides them with coverage.

Trump neither understands, nor particularly cares about this issue. This was evident way back in the primary, when he was promoting universal healthcare, and parroting left-wing talking points about Republicans being content with letting people "die on the sidewalks."

Just two weeks out from the election, he isn't much better. He speaks about *repeal and replace* as if it were an afterthought – a mere bullet point among a list of other grievances. He hasn't even bothered to dangle the issue like bait above conservatives' heads, like he has repeatedly with Supreme Court nominees.

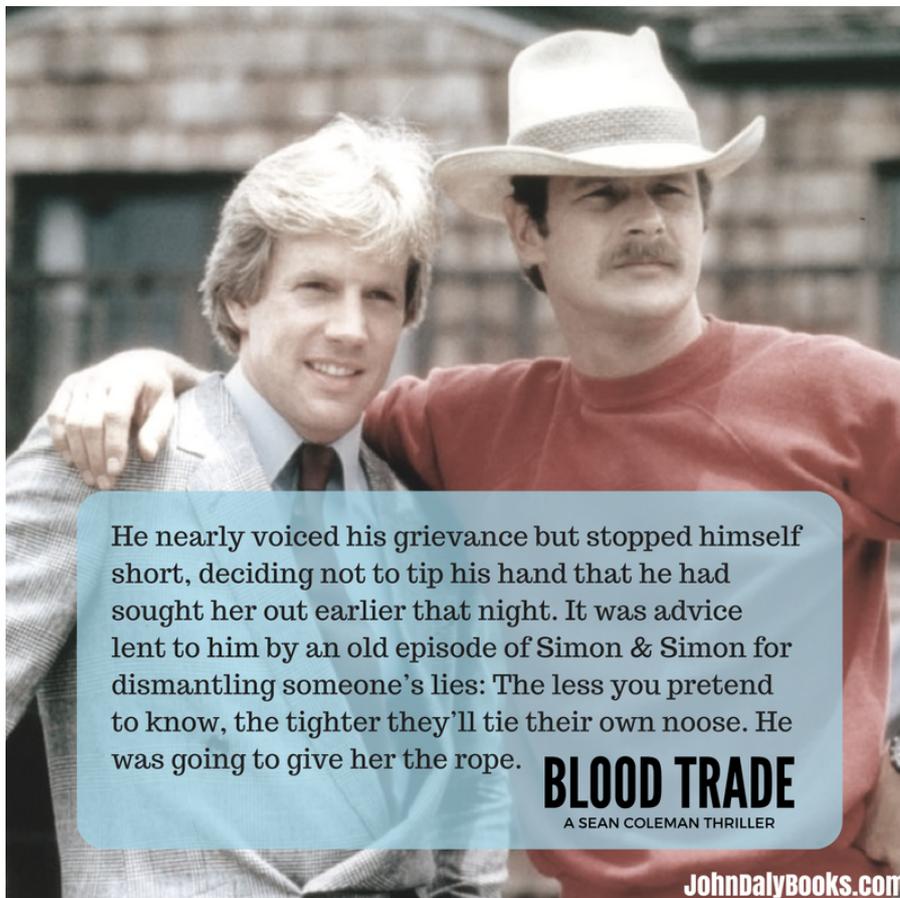
While Trump has managed to tap into a heck of a lot of populist anger over the past year and a half, Obamacare is an area where he has largely taken a pass. And by association, so has the GOP.

It's a scary situation when the person the country will likely have to rely on to deal with Obamacare's epic problems is Hillary Clinton. If that happens, the best we could possibly hope for is the influence of her husband, who actually seems interested in this issue, and is to the right of her politically.

My guess, however, is that Hillary will pursue the single-payer route, in the interest of her progressive base. If that

happens, the Republicans in congress (assuming they hold their majorities) should be able to prevent it. Unfortunately, they won't be able to actually *fix* the situation, being that they'll be facing the same presidential veto that they are now.

It's a terrible shame for the country that this vital opportunity was squandered, but it was a choice made by a plurality of Republican primary voters. And so we must live with it until the next election.



Order a signed, personalized copy of BLOOD TRADE, by BernardGoldberg.com's John Daly

Did Jonathan Gruber Ever Really Exist?



Who exactly *is* Jonathan Gruber, that mysterious MIT professor that most of us were first introduced to last week through videos of him gloating over the “stupidity” of American voters for not understanding that they were being conned into supporting Obamacare?

He sure seems like an important person. He was, after all, an architect of the Affordable Care Act, the most sweeping healthcare-related law of our time. He was a key player in federal legislation that took control of a sixth of the American economy. The guy has even earned millions of dollars from taxpayers for his government consulting work; \$400,000 for his work on the ACA alone.

Who is this man who has been praised by some of our nation’s top-level leaders?

Senate Majority Leader, Harry Reid called him, “one of the most respected economists in the world.” Former Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, and U.S. Senator Max Baucus cited Gruber’s studies in their public arguments in support of healthcare reform. Our current Secretary of State, John Kerry, called Gruber the Senate Financial Committee’s “guide” on costs related to Obamacare. Former Obama adviser, Steve Rattner, called Gruber the White House’s “guru” on health care, and said the administration viewed him “as an important

figure in helping to put Obamacare together.” Barack Obama himself even lauded Gruber, once admitting that he had stolen healthcare ideas from Gruber’s work.

As highly as these people regarded Gruber, the respect was clearly mutual. In an interview with PBS, Gruber praised the open-mindedness and dedication of President Obama. He explained how, in a meeting between the two in 2009, he sold the president on the necessity of the highly controversial coverage mandate.

Gruber sure seemed to be on top of the world. He’d earned his place in history. He had long dreamed of the kind of national healthcare system that was signed into law with Obamacare, and he had the ears of the most influential decision-makers in the country. It couldn’t have hurt that he made a small fortune in the process. Yet, after a week of conservative media outlets airing multiple videos showing Gruber copping to the administration’s willful deception of the *stupid* American public, *everything* seems to have changed. Once the toast of the country’s *ruling class*, Gruber has now become their *Invisible Man*.

Nancy Pelosi, who had previously touted Gruber’s work, claimed last week that she had never even heard of him, and that he had nothing to do with the ACA.

President Obama distanced himself and his administration from Gruber by calling the professor just “some adviser” who was never a member of his staff. Apparently, paying a consultant \$400,000 – courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer – doesn’t come with any *liability strings* attached, in the eyes of our president. That sure is strange considering that in 2012, President Obama’s re-election campaign proudly called Gruber one of the writers of Obamacare. They sure were thankful for his help back then. Now, he’s been demoted to just “some adviser.”

Universities where Gruber has spoken are reportedly scrubbing

their websites of Gruber's speeches and discussions, seemingly in an attempt to prevent more incriminating footage from turning up on Fox News. Academia is washing its hands of the once esteemed professor – at least until the media attention dies down.

Liberal, *New York* magazine writer Jonathan Chait, who called Gruber "the author of Obamacare" last week, is now feverishly insisting that Gruber just wasn't all that important to the ACA, and should be given no credit for writing the law.

One has to wonder what's next? Is Gruber's publishing company going to claim that he didn't even write that adorable Obamacare comic book of his?

For the past week, the mainstream media has been acting as if they don't know who Jonathan Gruber is either. While Fox News and conservative websites have been covering what the professor has been telling audiences about Obamacare over the past few years, few other outlets have. To them, Gruber just isn't newsworthy anymore – not like the days when he was mentioned regularly in major newspapers that were favorable to the ACA becoming law. Apparently, an admission of a massive lie told by a president to the country just doesn't hold the same weight as it used to.

It all seems very unfair to Professor Gruber. He really is, after all, an important figure in American history. Not only was he an architect of President Obama's signature accomplishment while in office, but he was also a key figure – by his own admission – in one of my generation's biggest political con jobs.

It feels like an injustice not to give him credit where credit is due. Don't you think?

7 Million Sign Up for ObamaCare – or Not

☒ President Obama, Kathleen Sebelius and the rest of the president's team are downright giddy because, as they tell us, more than six million Americans have signed up for the so-called Affordable Care Act. Wow! And that was *last* week. This week, the news is even better. Now, it's nearly seven million, we're told, who signed up, which was the goal set by the president early on.

What an achievement, especially after the disastrous rollout when a reasonable person might conclude that nobody would be able to sign up. Great job, Mr. President!

Too bad the White House forgot to tell the American people how great ObamaCare is. An AP poll taken right before the six million number was released showed that only 26 percent of Americans support the president's signature piece of legislation. That's the lowest approval rating since ObamaCare became law. (In fairness, the poll may be way off base since it wasn't conducted of "registered voters" or "likely voters" but simply "adults" – anyone, in other words, with a pulse.)

I don't want to be a party pooper but there are a few things we don't know. We don't know how many of the six or seven million actually paid their premium. If they didn't, they're not covered – and so they don't count.

We don't know how many fit into the key demographic – young and healthy, the ones whose money is desperately needed to keep the plan afloat.

We also don't know how many already had health insurance but got cancellation notices before they signed up for a new plan they didn't want. For all we know maybe only a million of those supposed six or seven million got medical insurance for the first time.

And there's something else we don't know. We don't know if the numbers the White House is putting out are even close to accurate.

Why should anyone take the administration's word for anything about ObamaCare given the number of times the president himself misled the American people? He told us if we liked our health care plan we could keep it, period. He told us if we liked our doctor, we could keep our doctor, period. He told us our premiums would be going down. Tell that to the millions whose premiums went up.

No one knows how this will turn out. It will take years to get an answer on that. But I suspect still more trouble is right over the horizon. I'm betting that more than a few young, healthy Americans who signed up will cancel within six months. Either they'll get an annual physical using their new insurance then drop out. Or they'll go half a year and wonder why they're paying for a product they think they don't need. And if they get sick when they have no insurance, they know they can go to the emergency room where they can't be turned down.

But even if seven million or so Americans really did sign up, wait until they find out what they're getting for their money. Not all hospitals are in all plans. Not all doctors are either. And this seems like a good time to remind everyone what President Obama told a woman named Jane Sturm back in 2009. Here's what Ms. Sturm asked the president:

"My mother is now over 105. But at 100, the doctors said to her, 'I can't do anything more unless you have a pacemaker.' I

said, 'Go for it.' She said, 'Go for it.' But the specialist said, 'No, she's too old.' But when the other specialist saw her and saw her joy of life, he said, 'I'm going for it.' That was over five years ago. My question to you is: Outside the medical criteria for prolonging life for somebody who is elderly, is there any consideration that can be given for a certain spirit, a certain joy of living, a quality of life, or is it just a medical cutoff at a certain age?"

And here's what the president told Jane Sturm about her mother:

"I don't think that we can make judgments based on people's spirit. That'd be a pretty subjective decision to be making. I think we have to have rules that say that we are gonna provide good quality care for all people. End-of-life care is one of the most difficult sets of decisions that we're gonna have to make. But understand that those decisions are already being made in one way or another. If they're not being made under Medicare and Medicaid, they're being made by private insurers. At least we can let doctors know and your mom know that, you know what, maybe this isn't gonna help. Maybe you're better off not having the surgery, but taking the painkiller."

Translation: A few pills are cheaper than a pacemaker. Or to put it another way: If she dies she dies.

Nancy Pelosi, who famously told us that, "we have to pass the bill so you can find out what is in it," more recently said that Democrats are proud of the Affordable Care Act and that Republicans are "wasting their time" using it as an issue in the midterm elections. This woman is a gem, a gift for the GOP that keeps on giving. If Nancy Pelosi didn't exist the Koch brothers would have to pay somebody to create her.

Leave a comment ... and tell your friends to sign up for FREE updates.

Is President Obama Delusional – or Just Political?

✘ Now that the deadline for signing up for the ironically named Affordable Care Act is upon us, it's a good time to remember that just about everything our president has told us has been – let's be nice and simply call it – untrue

Despite his promise, not all of us who like our doctor can keep our doctor, period.

And millions of us who liked our old insurance plans cannot keep them, period.

I don't know about you, but my premiums went up, not down, despite President Obama's promises to the contrary.

And what did the president learn from all that? Not much. Just this month he told us that ObamaCare, "is working the way it should." Does he think we're so stupid that we'd actually believe that, or – and this is a much scarier possibility – does he really believe his own nonsense?

Or to put it another way: Is President Obama delusional?

This is a subject Peter Wehner has just tackled in a smart piece for Commentary magazine, which runs under the headline, "Obama's World of Make Believe." In it he makes the case that

the president is “unable to adjust his views to the way things are.”

“So when his worldview collides with reality, he often can’t adjust,” according to Wehner. “He instead creates his own make believe world.

“We’ve seen it time and time again with the Affordable Care Act. ... We’ve also seen this in Mr. Obama’s dealings with Vladimir Putin, who with lightning speed has seized Crimea, threatens Ukraine, and whose top officials are now openly mocking the president (including with tweets ending with smiley faces). Yet President Obama insists that Putin is acting ‘out of weakness, not out of strength’ in attempting to take control of Crimea. This is an effort to seek comfort by engaging in an almost clinical level of delusion.”

Barack Obama came to office with a vision of how he would “fundamentally transform” America – and how his shining magnificence would not only stem the rise of the oceans and heal the planet but also would make the rest of the world love him. Vladimir Putin, apparently, didn’t get the message. Neither have most of the other leaders of the real world. Neither have most of the regular folks, either.

None of us knows if Mr. Obama actually is delusional or if he’s just a politician who says things to sound strong. Did he say his healthcare plan is working the way it’s supposed to and Putin is acting out of weakness because he really believes those things or because he needs to sound confident in a desperate effort to bring up his poll numbers? It must be tough for Mr. Obama, coming to office with so many acolytes telling him that he is The One, the Messiah ... only to learn that sycophants flatter but rarely tell the truth.

Peter Wehner ends his excellent piece with this: “For Barack Obama, the world is made of faith, and trust, and pixie dust.” The good news is that none of those things will help

his fellow Democrats this November.

Please let me know what you think ... leave a comment and tell your friends to sign up for free updates.

Could Pajama Onesies Be the Key to Engaging Young Americans?

✘ In my column last week, I explained why I didn't believe it was a smart idea for Republican candidates, in 2014, to present a GOP comprehensive healthcare plan as an alternative to Obamacare. My reasoning was that it would only give the Democrats something to demagogue, and draw some heat off of themselves, much like they did in response to Paul Ryan's proposed entitlement reforms in 2011.

A guy named "Chuck" posted a response in the comment section underneath my column, agreeing with me but also bringing up some additional points – good ones. He said that by taking the stance I did, I was essentially conceding that Republicans are unable to handle the critical onslaught of Democrats to tarnish Republican ideas. In other words, Republican

politicians were too inept to defend their own ideas and sway public opinion to their side, even though they have better solutions.

My intention for this week's column was to publicly respond to Chuck and tell him that he is absolutely right. I was going to tell him that in addition to the overwhelming liberal media bias that Republicans constantly have working against them, they're also contending with a Democratic machine that understands the electorate better than they do.

Am I saying that Democrats *relate* to the electorate better than Republicans? No. But they do *understand* it better. They understand how short the average American's attention span has become. They understand how self-centered and unengaged our society largely is. They understand how more and more people today can be played off of adolescent instincts and knee-jerk emotions such as envy. They understand that crying "racism" in the middle of a serious debate immediately ends thoughtful discussion. They understand that people can be led to believe that false rhetoric is true, simply by repeating it often enough.

For such reasons, the Democratic Party has had far more success connecting with voters – especially younger voters – in recent years, and the Republican Party has yet to figure out how to effectively counter that.

That's what I *was* going to say to Chuck.

But then last night, I logged into Twitter and found myself aghast at the Obama administration's latest attempt to try and get young people to enroll in Obamacare.

Tweeted directly from President Obama's official Twitter account was a new advertisement featuring the image (pictured above) of a young man holding a warm mug in his hand, while creepily clad in onesie-style pajamas – you know, the kind that are typically reserved for children under the age of

three. The caption beside him read, "How do you plan to spend the cold days of December? Wear Pajamas. Drink hot chocolate. Talk about getting health insurance."

One of the initial replies to the tweet came from Fox News' Brit Hume who comically wrote, "This is real. OMG."

My sentiments exactly.

The image has drawn a seemingly endless number of hilarious parody images from conservatives over the past 24 hours – many of which are downright genius. But all laughing aside, it seems to me that the advertisement itself speaks far beyond just an ill-advised political strategy. I think it's representative of the kind of condescension the Democratic machine views *Young America* with.

They see them as a bunch of dopey, easily-manipulated, overgrown children, and they're not even being subtle anymore in pandering to them as such. This was a key demographic in helping to get Barack Obama – twice. It's now a key demographic in the success of Obamacare. Yet, that demographic is recognized by the political party they've pledged their loyalty to as essentially a generation of hot chocolate-drinking adolescents, wearing kids' pajamas and loafing around in their parents' living rooms. 

As someone who's in his early 40's, I admit that I'm not exactly *in tune* with the mindset of today's twenty-somethings. But I *have* to believe that the *marketing whizzes* behind the pajama ad have helped shed some light on the condescending view the Democratic Party has of this nation's young people. And if I'm right, I would think that the GOP could find a way to draw attention to such patronage, and perhaps use it to put forth a more substantive message, thus swaying young people over to their way of thinking

My fear, however, is that I'm totally wrong. My fear is that

the image of a onesie-wearing weirdo (and others like it) might actually resonate with young people, cause them to disregard what's in their own best interests, and compel them to act as instructed.

If that's the case, the GOP might as well throw in the towel right now. The party's over.