

What's Worse: A Liar or a Realist?

☒ In the wake of the horrendous roll-out of Obamacare, there's been a new narrative emerging, not just in the political rhetoric flying around Washington, but also in the national media. That narrative is that the Republican Party needs to come up with a comprehensive healthcare solution of their own to present as an alternative to the troubles spawned by the Affordable Care Act.

The talking heads on network news have been asking for it. Congressional Democrats have been asking for it. Even President Obama finally seems interested in hearing what ideas the Republicans have to offer on healthcare – of course framing it in the context of proposed “improvements” to his own healthcare law.

The feeling seems to be – primarily from people on the left but also from some on the right – that it's not enough for Republicans just to focus on the flaws of Obamacare and loudly point out the hardships the law is causing for millions of Americans. They also need to offer a viable alternative to present to voters during the 2014 elections.

On its surface, the thought seems to make some sense. After all, politicians and pundits are always telling us that the American people are looking for solutions, and not heated rhetoric.

That might be true, but is that the kind of thing that wins elections? Proposed solutions?

It sure doesn't seem to be.

Back when the Iraq War was acting as a political albatross around the necks of Republicans, there was never any serious

pressure being put on Democratic politicians to offer up an alternative solution. Quite the opposite, in fact. Mere opposition to the continuation of the war was enough to gain them majority support from the electorate. And I would argue that the Democratic Party's repeated calls for a withdrawal date were no more a proposed solution than the Republican Party's repeated calls for repealing Obamacare.

Do I *want* the Republican Party to formulate a viable alternative to Obamacare? Sure. And despite what the liberal media and the White House are always telling people, the Republicans *have* offered several ideas for lowering the cost of healthcare for Americans. Those ideas include tort reform and allowing insurance competition across state lines. The Republicans just haven't packaged those ideas together as part of a comprehensive healthcare campaign strategy to run on in elections.

My message to the GOP is: Don't bother. Stick to opposing Obamacare for now, because that's all you'll need until after the 2014 elections.

You see, the last time President Obama and other Democrats called on Republicans to put forth a serious solution to deal with a serious problem, Congressman Paul Ryan stepped forward with a comprehensive, realistic plan to reform our entitlement programs and significantly trim deficits. This was back in 2011.

That ended up being a terrible, terrible mistake on Ryan's part – politically anyway. The president and his party immediately waged a campaign of shameless demagoguery against that plan, claiming that it would essentially lead to the destruction of America. They said that it would let bridges collapse, force disabled children to fend for themselves, and throw wheelchair-ridden grandmothers over cliffs.

As any honest, informed person knows, any realistic plan to

effectively deal with a problem as serious as our national debt requires a big change. Ryan's *big change* was to keep Medicare intact for people 55 or older, while altering the program for everyone else by turning to private sector solutions and providing government subsidies.

But that sure isn't the way the plan was portrayed by the Democratic Party and the mainstream media. No, they successfully convinced many people that Ryan's plan would actually *end* Medicare for the millions of senior citizens that depended on the program. They went all-in with that narrative and put a ton of money behind their messaging.

Politifact later awarded the Democrats' false charge with the title of "Biggest Lie of the Year", but that didn't matter. The campaign proved to be an effective way of distracting Americans away from the failed economic policies of the Democratic Party, and it even won the Democrats some special-election seats that were previously thought to be shoe-ins for Republican candidates.

The strategy took the heat off of the Democrats (who were reeling from scores of terrible economic data that kept pouring in), and deflected it onto the Republican Party that was still enjoying some momentum off of the Tea Party landslide of 2010.

In other words, an honest, realistic solution, that was put forth to deal with a serious problem, was defeated by a baldfaced lie. And to this day, far more ill-will is harbored toward Paul Ryan for presenting his plan than is harbored toward the Democratic Party for lying about that plan.

Sometimes it's worse to be a realist than it is to be a liar.

You see, right now a good portion of the American public is mad at President Obama for lying to them repeatedly about the impact of Obamacare. And even though the Republican Party

isn't faring well in public opinion polls, most political analysts seem to believe that the hit Obama's approval rating is taking, and anger over Obamacare, could very well lead the GOP to maintain the House of Representatives and pick up the Senate in 2014.

It seems to me that the Republicans would be foolish to lay out a comprehensive alternative to Obamacare. As we saw with Paul Ryan's plan, it would simply give an opportunity to the Democrats and the liberal media to twist whatever realistic solutions are in it, completely misrepresent and demagogue the affect they would have on Americans, and lift some of the negative Obamacare attention off of themselves.

Personally, I'm sick of watching liberals successfully deflect criticism of them by portraying an opposing, logical solution as being more fearful than the grim reality they've created for this country. So my advice for the GOP would be the following: 

Relentlessly highlight the numerous problems with Obamacare, continue to put the spotlight on the millions of people the law has hurt, and continue to call for its repeal. But don't get bogged down in the nuance of articulating a comprehensive alternative.

Keep in mind that prior to the passage of the Affordable Care Act, polls consistently showed that over 80% of the country was satisfied with the healthcare system and the access they had to it. These people don't need to be sold on a big new plan. They just need to be reminded of how much worse things are now.

Stay on the offense. Don't force yourself onto defense. When asked, go ahead and talk about things like tort reform and competition across state lines, but don't get hung up on the specifics.

The election successes the Democratic Party has enjoyed over the past seven years or so haven't come from stating specifics, and they sure as heck haven't come from proposing serious solutions. There's something Republicans can learn from that.

Then, once you win the Senate and maintain the House, prepare to repeal Obamacare as best you can, put forth a viable, realistic solution, and *then* – and only then – sell that solution to the American public.

That's my advice. The GOP can take it for what it's worth.

It's Not the Lie... It's That the Media Suddenly Cares

✘ What exactly constitutes a scandal?

I see that question debated on the Internet from time to time, as well as on the news networks. Many people impulsively associate the term with an illegal activity, but the textbook definition of it is actually quite broad and thus fairly subjective: *A disgraceful or discreditable action*. Thus, what some people would consider a scandal, many others might not.

In the realm of politics, however, I've come to realize (especially over the past few years) that the term "scandal" has a much different meaning – one that is quite narrow, actually.

A *political scandal* is whatever the media *wants* to be a political scandal.

And when I'm referring to "the media," I'm not just talking

about a group of outliers like a single cable news network and a handful of other journalists. I'm talking about a media *consensus* in which most of the major outlets have identified the action and recognize that action as being *disgraceful and discreditable*.

For nearly five years, the media largely overlooked the disreputable (and sometimes reprehensible) activities that the Obama administration was involved in – ones that they would have assuredly obsessed over had George W. Bush still been in office.

They treated *Fast and Furious* as a joke. They ran interference on Benghazi, showing painfully little curiosity in what actually happened that night, and then bending over backwards to try and rationalize the falsehoods repeatedly told by the administration as a mere *communication problem*. They were more intent on distancing the president from the IRS's illegal harassment of conservative groups than investigating the White House's possible links to that harassment. The wire-tapping of reporter James Rosen, on the grounds that he may have been a co-conspirator with North Korea, has all but been forgotten. They shrugged their shoulders at Obama's incoherent (yet highly consequential) policy on Syria, and later bolstered the ridiculous argument that Vladimir Putin's diffusion of the situation was somehow part of our president's *master plan*.

One could make the case that the media's handling of these stories was every bit as scandalous as the stories themselves.

With the roll-out of Obamacare, however, the landscape seems to have suddenly changed. The media is actually scrutinizing the Healthcare.gov debacle and asking tough questions about who knew what and when. Journalists, in large numbers, are actually calling out the president's repeated false statements in his selling of Obamacare, and are holding him accountable not only for those statements, but for his latest, mind-boggling assertion that he never made such statements in the

first place.

Yes folks, journalists seem to finally be doing their jobs!

Why now? I think a lot of it's because President Obama isn't going anywhere. The guy the media invested so much energy into getting elected twice won't be running for office again. He's *locked in* for the next three years so their mission to achieve the *greater good* has already been accomplished. In that sense, these journalists might be feeling less pressure to show up to the games and cheer-lead his path to victory.

But part of me also wonders if they feel betrayed. The dream of government healthcare had been burning in the hearts of liberals for decades – long before their love affair with Barack Obama ever began. And despite all of the examples of where government intrusion into healthcare has failed across the world, many on the left (including the vast majority of journalists) believe such a system is beneficial to society and will make life better for everyone.

I don't think that most liberals in the media acted as advocates for the Affordable Care Act simply because they adored President Obama. While that was certainly part of it, I think they really did believe in the cause, serving as activists instead of journalists and further sacrificing their legitimacy with the American public in the process.

They did it because they were true believers. They viewed Obamacare the same way Joe Biden viewed it: As a big f'n deal.

Imagine how people in the media felt, then, when they discovered that the administration approached their *dream's* roll-out with inexplicable, jaw-dropping incompetence in the form of an untested, total dud of a website. It probably felt to them as if they had been stood-up on prom-night, left alone on a front-porch, decked out in fancy clothes and hairdos with nowhere to go.

And just like a love-struck school girl who ignored all of her friends' warnings about her *dream guy's* repeated false promises, the media had to witness the blatant deception *first-hand* before finally realizing that many Americans, in fact, do *not* get to keep their current doctors and health plans. 

In other words, this is now a big deal because the media's emotions were toyed with. They're feeling scorned, thus they've finally managed to recognize a scandal.

Unfortunately, as we can see by the president's plummeting approval ratings, the public *only* seems to see a problem when the media sees a problem. Conservatives like myself would love to believe that the mainstream media has marginalized itself beyond influence because of their biases, but that just isn't true. They're still quite relevant because their collective narratives usually do sink into mainstream America, one way or another.

Will the media continue to challenge the administration with this degree of vigor for the next three years? No. Of course not. They'll patch things up with the president, as is the fate of many bad relationships.

And to the country's detriment, when the media no longer sees a problem, neither will many Americans.