

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.

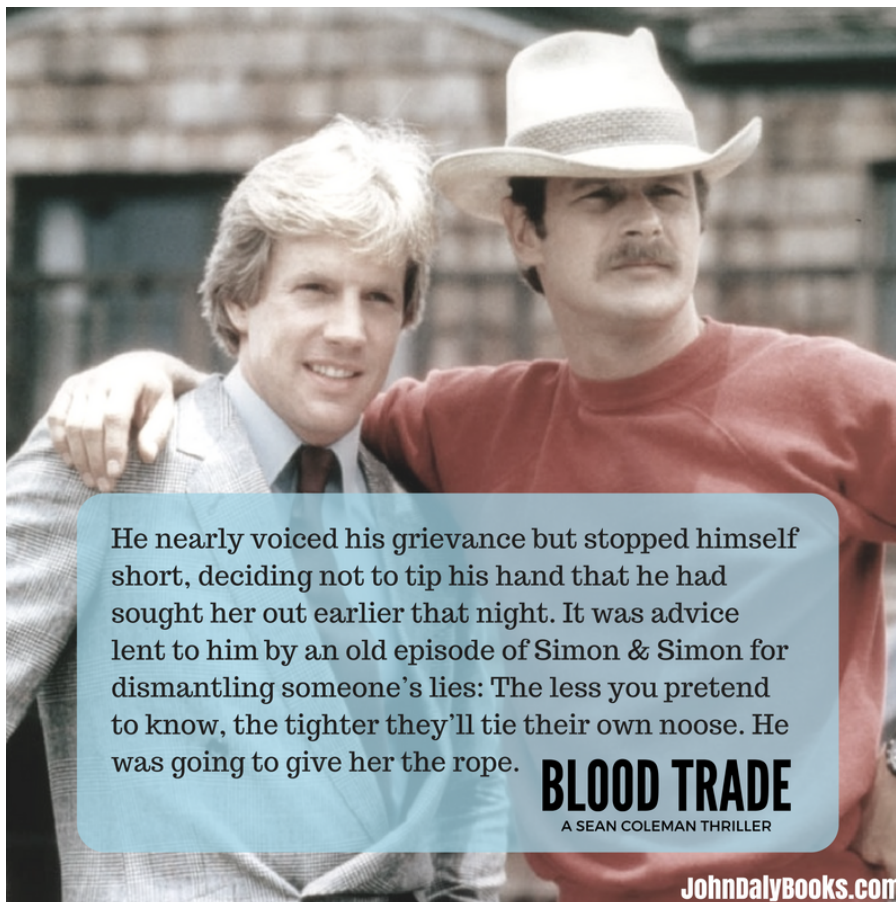
While Trump has managed to tap into a heck of a lot of populist anger over the past year and a half, Obamacare is an area where he has largely taken a pass. And by association, so has the GOP.

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.



He nearly voiced his grievance but stopped himself short, deciding not to tip his hand that he had sought her out earlier that night. It was advice lent to him by an old episode of Simon & Simon for dismantling someone's lies: The less you pretend to know, the tighter they'll tie their own noose. He was going to give her the rope.

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