

The President's Weekly Address

August 17, 2013

Hi, everybody. Over the past few weeks, I've been visiting with Americans across the country to talk about what we need to do to secure a better bargain for the middle class.

We need to rebuild an economy that rewards hard work and responsibility, an economy built firmly on the cornerstones of middle class life: good jobs, a good education, a home of your own, a secure retirement, and quality, affordable health care that's there when you need it.

Right now we're well on our way to fully implementing the Affordable Care Act. And in the next few months, we'll reach a couple milestones with real meaning for millions of Americans.

If you're one of the 85 percent of Americans who already have insurance, you've already got new benefits and protections under this law that you didn't before: free checkups, mammograms, and contraceptive care; discounted prescription medicine on Medicare; the fact you can stay on your parent's plan until you turn 26; and much, much more. And it's okay if you're not a fan of the Affordable Care Act; you can take advantage of these things anyway.

If you don't have insurance, beginning on October 1, private plans will actually compete for your business. You can comparison shop in an online marketplace, just like you would for cell phone plans or plane tickets. You may be eligible for new tax credits to help you afford the plan that's right for you. And if you're among the up to half of all Americans who've been sick or have a preexisting condition, this law means that beginning January 1, insurance companies have to cover you, and they can't use your medical history to charge you more than anybody else.

You can find out more about the law and how to sign up to buy your own coverage right now at healthcare.gov. Tell your friends and neighbors without insurance about it too. And tell your kids that there's a new, easy way to buy affordable plans specifically tailored to young people.

Many Members of Congress in both parties are working hard to inform their constituents about these benefits, protections, and affordable plans. But there's also a group of Republicans in Congress working hard to confuse people and making empty promises that they'll either shut down the health care law or, if they don't get their way, they'll shut down the Government.

Think about that. They're actually having a debate between hurting Americans who will no longer be denied affordable care just because they've been sick and harming the economy and millions of Americans in the process. And many Republicans are more concerned with how badly this debate will hurt them politically than they are with how badly it'll hurt the country.

A lot of Republicans seem to believe that if they can gum up the works and make this law fail, they'll somehow be sticking it to me. But they'd just be sticking it to you.

Some even say that if you call their office with questions about the law, they'll refuse to help. Call me old fashioned, but that's lousy constituent service. And it's not what you deserve.

Your health insurance isn't something to play politics with. Our economy isn't something to play politics with. This is not a game. It's about the economic security of millions of families.

See, in the States where Governors and legislatures and insurers are working together to implement this law properly—States like California, New York, Colorado, and Maryland—competition and consumer choice are actually making insurance affordable.

So I'm going to keep doing everything in my power to make sure this law works as it's supposed to. Because in the United States of America, health insurance isn't a privilege, it's your right. And we're going to keep it that way.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:35 p.m. on August 9 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on August 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 16, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 17.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Subjects: Congress : Bipartisanship; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Health insurance exchange; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers.

DCPD Number: DCPD201300569.