**ARTICLE C**

**“Obamacare Signups Sag and It’s Trumps’ Fault?”**

(6 Feb. 2017)

Shortly following Donald Trump’s upset victory in November, the Obama administration and the legacy media began telling us that Obamacare enrollment was skyrocketing due to fear of the president-elect’s pledge to repeal the law. Three days after the election, for example, CNN produced this [headline](https://money.cnn.com/2016/11/10/news/economy/obamacare-sign-ups-trump/): “Obamacare sign-ups surge after Trump’s election.” Obama himself [boasted](https://talkingpointsmemo.com/livewire/obamacare-biggest-sign-up-day) in December about “the biggest day ever for Healthcare.gov.” Well, like everything else these people told us, this was hogwash. The actual signup numbers are in, and they are the lowest ever. What happened? CNN reports that the slump was [caused](https://money.cnn.com/2017/02/03/news/economy/obamacare-enrollment-trump/) by… er… Trump.

That’s right, the same “news” outlet that claimed fear of Trump was driving enrollments to record highs now says that the President is the cause of Obamacare’s worst signup year ever. And former Obama administration officials are singing the same refrain. The Hill [reports](https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/317757-former-obama-official-trump-blocked-500000-people-from-health-coverage), “A former Obama administration official estimates that nearly 500,000 people missed out on ObamaCare enrollment this year because of moves by the Trump administration.” This comes from Joshua Peck, former chief marketing officer for HealthCare.gov, who claims that Trump accomplished this dark deed by pulling a few ads at the end of the enrollment period.

This fiction ignores the outrageous premiums and deductibles that characterized the 2017 Obamacare plans. It also fails to acknowledge the paucity of choices offered by the exchanges. As the Daily Signal [points out](https://dailysignal.com/2017/01/10/70-percent-of-us-counties-only-have-1-or-2-insurers-on-obamacare-exchanges/), “The Heritage Foundation finds that insurer competition in the Obamacare exchanges is worse than ever in 2017, with 70 percent of counties having only one or two insurers selling coverage.” This is nearly twice the number of counties that offered so few choices last year. Note to Mr. Peck and anyone else afflicted with economic illiteracy — when you raise prices (on health plans or widgets) while reducing choice, you get fewer buyers.

And that is precisely what happened. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), reported Friday that the cost of the plans offered by HealthCare.gov [experienced](https://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2017-Fact-Sheet-items/2017-02-03.html) “a 25 percent increase over the previous year in the average premium… as well as a 28 percent decline in the number of [insurers] participating over the past year.” Thus, the paltry 9.2 million signup total not only falls short of last year’s figure, it continues Obamacare’s consistent record of failing to hit its enrollment targets. As Jeffrey Anderson [wrote](https://www.weeklystandard.com/cbo-misses-its-obamacare-projection-by-24-million-people/article/2001732) in the Weekly Standard last year, the shortfall had already reached 24 million before the 2017 enrollment period had begun:

Three years ago, on the eve of Obamacare’s implementation, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projected that President Obama’s centerpiece legislation would result in an average of 201 million people having private health insurance in any given month of 2016. Now that 2016 is here, the CBO says that just 177 million people, on average, will have private health insurance in any given month of this year — a shortfall of 24 million people.

This failure to hit its enrollment goals has plagued Obamacare since its comically inept rollout. As Sharyl Attkisson [wrote](https://dailysignal.com/2014/06/24/obamacare-exchanges-disappointing/) six months after the launch, the actual number of Americans newly insured by the “Affordable Care Act” fell far short of the 8 million figure promulgated by the Obama administration: “Assuming the most positive estimates — that 85 percent of the 8 million enrollees have paid their premiums and 43 percent had coverage before — the newly insured would number only about 3.9 million.” Even if the administration’s estimate had not been deliberately [fudged](https://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20141120/BLOG/311209995), it would have amounted to well under a third of CMS projections.

The enrollment pace was nearly as lethargic during Obamacare’s second enrollment period as it had been for 2014, and the gory details of the 2016 plan year are provided above. In other words, lackluster signup totals have constituted an ongoing failure of the “Affordable Care Act” since it was first foisted on an unwilling electorate. Yet the legacy media and various refugees from the Obama administration still expect us to believe that the sorry signup performance [reported](https://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2017-Fact-Sheet-items/2017-02-03.html) Friday by CMS is somehow the fault of a president who took office three weeks ago. As the New York Times [puts it](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/03/upshot/drop-in-late-obamacare-enrollment-appears-to-be-a-trump-effect.html), “Drop in Late Obamacare Enrollment Appears to Be a Trump Effect.”

This is not atypical of the wacky logic employed by Obamacare apologists. Jonathan Chait, for example, gives the “Affordable Care Act” credit for the [following](https://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/01/the-republicans-own-obamacare-now.html): “Medical inflation has dropped to its lowest level in decades.” The only problem with this claim, according to CMS, is that this [decline](https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/Downloads/HistoricalNHEPaper.pdf) in health care inflation began in 2003. Presumably, Chait believes that the White House is equipped with a “wayback machine” that allowed President Obama to retroactively fix inflation and now allows President Trump to go back in time to retard Obamacare enrollments. Using this kind of logic, he concludes that the Republicans now “own Obamacare.”

That, by the way, is where all this “Trump effect” nonsense is going. The Democrats and their media mouthpieces know that Obamacare has decimated their party. Thus, they desperately want to deed it over to Trump and the GOP. They couldn’t care less if their reasoning fails to pass the laugh test or how many rhetorical pirouettes they must execute. They just want to get rid of the damned thing. The voters, however, know the “Affordable Care Act” has made their lives worse and that no Republican voted for the law — not one. The Democrats own Obamacare, and (please pardon the mixed metaphor) it’s a bear market for white elephants right about now.