

Politics and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) or Obamacare, as it's popularly known, expanded the number of Americans who have access to medical insurance through both Medicaid and by upgrading the quality of coverage offered by private insurers. A majority of Democrats in both Congress and the Senate were in support of the law while republicans were against it almost wholesomely. This paper analyses the effect that re-election concerns and voters' views have on healthcare policy-making by politicians.

In the year 2010, the Affordable Health Care Act was passed amidst great opposition from republican legislatures (Emanuel & Gluck, 2020). During debates on the bill in social halls, many republican voters expressed their opposition to the law on grounds that it amounted to socialism and that it would reduce the quality of healthcare offered especially to critically ill people. 6 years later when Donald Trump took over as president, Republicans had control of both houses and it was expected that they would quickly repeal the ACA. However, by this time many Republican voters had been won over by the benefits of improved health coverage, and therefore efforts to repeal the law were hampered. Moderate Republicans, fearing angry constituents who had gotten used to some of the perks of the ACA could not risk losing their seats in the 2018 midterm elections and so they made it impossible for the Republican Party even with its majority in both houses to repeal the law.

Clearly, voters' views have a huge bearing on the kinds of policies that are passed by lawmakers. While most Republican voters still want the ACA repealed because they see it as part of Barrack Obama's legacy, many of them are reluctant to let go of some of the benefits of the law (Kant Patel & Rushefsky, 2020). An example of this benefit is that the expanded Medicaid has led to more than 20 million new Americans being covered by health insurance since the law was passed, most of them being from middle and low-income households. Recent polls have shown that the law's popularity has been steadily rising over its 10-year history (Weil, 2020). Politicians have had to reconsider their views regarding the law, with many resorting to negative publicity to try and sway their constituents' opinions on the matter.

In conclusion, policymaking regarding health care is quite sensitive to both voters and the policymakers themselves. Certain positions may swing states from one party to another, therefore, politicians will often consider their constituents' opinions before supporting or rejecting certain policies.