

It's Time for Republicans to 'Man Up' on Obamacare

Stop me if you've heard this before. Stories are already circulating that any number of weak-willed Republicans are looking for some way to slow down the repeal ObamaCare train and call the whole thing off until everybody agrees on the perfect replacement solution. That day, of course, will never come. Leadership is about doing the right thing, forging ahead despite the hand-wringing of nervous Nellies, who seem to sprout like dandelions every time the GOP is faced with a tough decision.

The problem is the GOP and Donald Trump campaigned on repealing ObamaCare on day one. They had better deliver and get this thing done. Of course, the left will yammer incessantly about all those left behind, hoping America will forget that after eight years of the wonders of ObamaCare we still have 29.8 million Americans without health insurance and premiums as well as deductibles are going up by double digits every year. It's time for the GOP to man up, ignore the nattering nabobs of negativism, and do the right thing.

I've written elsewhere that the GOP should just repeal ObamaCare and replace it with nothing. Health insurance companies, who want to stay in business and want employers to continue to buy their product, will develop virtually overnight health insurance plans for every budget, from low cost, high deductible plans that everyone can afford to Cadillac plans for Wall Street firms. They will do this without any coercion or mandates from the federal government. The more the GOP tries to tinker with some alternative to ObamaCare, some low-fat version of ObamaCare 2.0, the more the American people will blame them for its problems.

Republicans are supposed to be all about the free market and

getting government out of meddling in the economy. Well, the healthcare industry is a \$3 trillion slice of the economy. If you want to get government out of the way, that's a pretty good place to start. If there's that much money sloshing around, industrious and innovative leaders in the healthcare industry can find a way to earn their fair share of that market. And the American people will benefit from more choices and lower costs as American entrepreneurs compete with each other for our business.

But right now, thanks to ObamaCare, it's actually illegal for insurers to sell affordable insurance policies. Illegal! Insurers could sell low-premium catastrophic policies starting tomorrow morning that would give Americans the peace of mind of knowing that they were protected in case of a major health event. But insurers would be breaking the law to do it. That's obscene, and the Republicans can do something about that. And they promised us they would.

Besides, if the GOP gets government out of the way, they can always point the finger of blame at the health industry. "Hey," they can say, "we got onerous government regulations and dictates out of your way. You're free to develop any plans you'd like to fit any budget. So don't come complaining to us if you can't figure out a way to produce a product people want to buy."

Can a repeal without a replace work? Absolutely. New Zealand is living proof. In 1984, a liberal government, facing a severe budget challenge, cut off 30 major subsidies to the agriculture industry virtually overnight. No transition, no replace, just repeal. While agriculture and healthcare are different industries, of course, there is no reason why what worked with one part of the economy can't work with another. If liberals can make it work in New Zealand, conservatives can certainly make it work in the United States.

Nick Clark, general policy manager of the Federated Farmers of

New Zealand, said, of the sudden withdrawal of subsidies, "There was no substantive government effort to soften the effect of change."

Although the suddenness of the repeal created challenges for farmers, consumers and politicians, once the artificial influence of government intrusion into the free market was taken out of the way, New Zealand agriculture flourished rather than floundered, confounding all the gloom and doom predictions of the naysayers. Farmers were free to grow crops based exclusively on what people wanted to eat rather than what the government wanted them to produce.

Farmers discovered, perhaps to their own surprise, they were far more resourceful than they thought. Today, New Zealand's farmers are among the most innovative and productive in the world.

Before the subsidy reform, New Zealand's dairy farmers produced 35 products from milk. Today they produce 2,200, including antibody milk and chocolate cheese. And a vigorous wine industry emerged which was barely alive before the reforms.

Clark points out that since the subsidies were withdrawn, farmers cut costs and diversified their land use in addition to developing new products.

And now, Clark adds, farmers "do not want subsidies back. Most farmers want government out of their lives and do not want to be beholden to it."

Mike Peterson, New Zealand's special agricultural trade envoy, said, that while the experience was certainly not trouble-free, it was worth it.

"Having been through pain, we can say going cold turkey was the right thing—although frankly I don't think any other country would do that and I wouldn't expect them to either,

because the social pain would be too much to bear. But here, we've developed a newfound sense of resourcefulness that has encouraged farmers to look after their own interests. For many farmers, I think they underestimate just how good they are, just how successful they can be without government support."

Could a similar approach work with health care? Absolutely. Let's give insurers and health care providers a chance to show America that in reality they are the good guys, providing a critically important product at an affordable price. They can do it. The only help they need from the Republicans is to get the suffocating and strangling grip of the federal government off their necks.

Do the Republicans have the smarts and the guts to do it? Well, we'd all better find out the answer to that question right now. It's time for the Republican party to do the novel thing and actually keep the promises they have made to the American people. We have given Republicans the House, the Senate and the presidency. We did so in part because they gave us their solemn promise to repeal ObamaCare root and branch.

If they intend to keep their word, today would be a good day to start. No more excuses. {eoa}

Bryan Fischer *is host of the two-hour weekday "Focal Point" program on American Family Radio.*

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