



Gingrich Predicts Demise of Health Care Law

By Jennifer DePaul

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President Obama's health-care overhaul law will be repealed by early 2013, according to Republican presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich. Gingrich, speaking Friday at the National Press Club discussed the impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in advance of the one-year anniversary of its passage. Health care and the repeal of the new law loom as key issues for some potential Republican presidential candidates in the 2012 race.

Even if Republicans can't repeal the law before 2014, the point at which the law becomes fully implemented, the former Speaker of the House said Republican leadership will be able to defund it. In a symbolic vote in January, House Republicans voted overwhelmingly to repeal the law largely to pacify Tea Party members and make good on their campaign promises from November that helped them take control of the House. Now attention turns to the ways to defund it.

"He [the president] can block them from repeal," Gingrich said. "I don't think he can coerce them into funding. It's unfortunate that the Obama administration is stonewalling serious rethinking of this bill because in the form that it came through and the way they wrote it, it's clearly an indefensible bill."

Some Republicans pushed recently to add health-care defunding amendments to a short-term spending bill, but failed in their attempt. Many GOP members were upset about the bill for that reason and broke ranks with party leadership to vote against the stopgap spending measure to keep the government operating. it.

In the year since the health care overhaul was passed, two federal judges have ruled the law unconstitutional while three have upheld it. Gingrich said there is a possibility the health care law could be overturned in the courts but it shouldn't be counted on as a strategy. Instead he said, "over time the sheer weight of public opinion forces the system to follow the people. We have very few examples of a reform which has been opposed by the American people which survives."

Democrats have criticized Republicans for not offering a comprehensive alternative to the law. “Republicans are a little skittish about trotting out an alternative given all the demagoguery in the last election,” said John Goodman, president of the national Center for Policy Analysis. “But if there some serious effort on the part of both parties to go back to the bargaining table we could have a much better health reform.”

Whether the health care overhaul is repealed, defunded or rejected in the courts, Gingrich is confident it won't survive. “The best you are going to get is a real mess from the standpoint of the left and the worst you are going to get is total repeal,” Gingrich said.

The Obama administration hopes the one-year anniversary of the health overhaul designed to extend health insurance coverage to millions of Americans will offer a fresh opportunity to increase public support for the measure.

Public opinion remains largely unchanged since President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) into law, according to a new Kaiser Health News tracking poll. The poll finds 53 percent of Americans continue to report they are confused about the law, only slightly less than the 55 percent who responded in April of last year right after the bill was passed into law. Fifty-two percent say they don't have enough information on how the law will affect them and 42 percent have a favorable view of the bill, down from 46 percent one year ago.