

Health Care: Victory for Obamacare, A Defeat for the American People

By [Shamus Cooke](#)

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The political victory for President Obama in the Supreme Court has created an interesting shift in American politics. More important than the blow against his Republican opponent has been the re-energizing of Obama's base, a loose coalition of liberals, labor, and leftists.

Many in these groups were lured into supporting Obamacare because of the political forces aligned against it, especially the loud extremists of the right wing. Obama's campaign skillfully exploited this fact, and soon a win for Obamacare was a strike against evil. The massive disappointment the President had been to his once enthusiastic supporters was swept aside amid anti-Republican euphoria, just in time for election season.

But aligning with Obama will have dire consequences for his allies, who are leaving the wider working class behind in an attempt to boost a President who hasn't earned the support. Without the active support of their base and broader population, the liberal and labor groups supporting Obama have less leverage to make the critical political demands needed to fight the recession, ensuring that their demands will fall on deaf ears.

The sad fact remains that most Americans do not support Obamacare, as poll after poll has shown. The pro-Democratic Party New York Times reports:

"...just 32 percent supported the Affordable Care Act when it was approved in March 2010, according to a New York Times/CBS News poll. As of a month ago, 34 percent supported it, virtually unchanged."

Keep in mind that the anti-Obamacare majority includes many members of labor, senior, and liberal groups whose leadership endorsed the measure.

Indeed, Obamacare will negatively affect labor and senior groups in a direct way. The health care legislation levies new taxes on "Cadillac" health care plans – any health care policy that is above meager. Union members typically have these plans, and employers are already preparing for the new tax by slashing these plans with an aim to get them below the Obamacare tax threshold.

The fact that Obamacare gives employers this strong incentive to weaken their employees health care plan is not an accident, but a key provision in the plan that will fundamentally change health care in a negative way, for millions of people.

Worse still is that the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) predicts that employers are expected to use Obamacare as an excuse to stop providing employer-based health care altogether, creating millions of newly-uninsured employees who will then be mandated to

buy insurance for themselves.

The CBO predicts that 3-5 million people are likely to be victimized in this way, but the figure could rise to 20 million. Of course employers will take advantage of Obamacare to shift the cost of health care onto individuals, in the same way that employers shifted away from pensions and onto the 401(k) scheme.

Senior groups – most notably the AARP – supported Obamacare even though it is funded, in part, by cutting Medicare by \$500 billion. Politifact explains:

“Nearly \$220 billion [in Medicare cuts] comes from reducing annual increases in payments that health care providers [hospitals, etc.] would otherwise receive from Medicare...Then there’s another \$136 billion in projected savings that would come from changes [cuts] to the Medicare Advantage program. About 25 percent of Medicare beneficiaries are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan.”

Of course, cutting Medicare reimbursements to health care providers will result in reduced care for Medicare beneficiaries, who already suffer from a shortage of providers who will accept Medicare.

Most ominous are the millions of people who will be mandated to buy shoddy corporate health insurance that they would have bought already, if they felt they could afford it (only the very poorest people will get free health care from Obamacare).

It is expected that over 26 million people will remain uninsured after Obamacare is implemented, while the corporate-dominated health care industry has been empowered with millions of new customers, ensuring that further progress in the health care field will remain blocked.

There are undoubtedly progressive aspects to Obamacare. But the above facts will create tens of millions – potentially hundreds of millions of angry people – the same people who are being ignored by the labor and liberal groups who’ve promoted Obamacare. This is the key point.

Working people are a powerful social force when they are united and act collectively. Labor and liberal groups have caused unnecessary divisions by supporting a health care law that victimizes millions of working people. These groups misled their members into supporting Obamacare for obvious political reasons, since they have deep ties to the Democratic Party.

These ties are quickly evolving into chains for working people. Contrary to the opinion of some labor leaders, Obamacare is not a “step in the right direction”. Further steps towards a sane health care system have been frozen, since the Obama-attached left has misrepresented Obamacare as a savior; these groups will not be inspired to fight for universal health care because they are happy – thrilled! – with Obama’s plan.

Most importantly, labor and liberal leaders have made it profoundly more difficult to view Obama and the Democrats as they should be: a political adversary that must be challenged in the streets. The jobs recession is again deepening, which will create further city, state, and national deficits that will be used to further gouge social services and lead to more layoffs.

The last four years have been detrimental for millions of working people, and the political party overseeing this misery is going into the next election as a “champion of working people,” thanks to Obama’s stalwart supporters that lead working class organizations.

A mass movement is needed for real change, but left groups have chained the movement to a president who wants nothing to do with such as movement, as his attitude towards the Occupy and the Wisconsin movement more than proved.

Obama has again disarmed the left, which will sadly repeat history by scrambling, post-election, to find an independent voice to deal with the recession and continued assaults on working people. A mass movement is the only salvation for working people, requiring that uniting demands – a federal jobs program, Medicare for all, taxing the rich, etc. – be fought for in the streets against all those who oppose them, both Democrats and Republicans.

Watering down demands to promote Democrats is a strategy that weakens the workers’ movement at a crucial time. Hopefully, Obamacare is history’s last example.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for Workers Action (www.workerscompass.org). He can be reached at shamuscooke@gmail.com

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