

How Obama Lied About Obamacare

By [Eric Zuesse](#)

Global Research, January 10, 2015

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#),
[Science and Medicine](#)

When U.S. Senator Barack Obama was campaigning for the Presidency in [2007](#) and 2008, he promised that on healthcare, his plan would be [“making health insurance universal.”](#)

This means he was promising that [100%](#) of Americans would have health-insurance, once Obamacare (the “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act”) is up and running.

The first open enrollment period under Obamacare lasted from October 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014; and, so, there have now been a full 15 months, during which period, it’s been up and running: Americans have been buying health insurance under the Act for 15 months now.

Did it meet that basic promise he made? Is it even coming close? If it hasn’t come close, is it likely ever to get there?

The answers to all of these questions are uniformly and unequivocally no, and Obama knew that this would be the case, even back when he was running for the Presidency. All of this will be documented here.

Since 2008, while he was campaigning for the White House, the Gallup Poll has been tracking the percentage-rate at which Americans lacked health insurance. [It started out at 14.6%, and on January 7th Gallup reported that it’s now 12.9%.](#) So: whereas around 85% of Americans had health insurance when Obama was campaigning that he would be “making health insurance universal,” the comparable figure is around 87% today, after his plan was in force for 15 months. He had promised that it would instead be 100%. Was this promise, which he repeatedly made while campaigning for the Presidency, ever even realistic? Perhaps some people would say no, and that Obama’s campaign-promise was just unrealistic (perhaps as a result of his “inexperience” or “naïveté”), not an outright lie — but they’d be clearly and unequivocally wrong in saying that.

First of all, the goal of universal care is certainly realistic, because it’s already achieved in the other industrialized nations. This is a major reason why, when the Commonwealth Fund issued on 16 June 2014 their study, [“How the U.S. Health Care System Compares Internationally,”](#) they reported that:

“The United States health care system is the most expensive in the world, but this report and prior editions consistently show the U.S. underperforms relative to other countries on most dimensions of performance. Among the 11 nations studied in this report—Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States—the U.S. ranks last, as it did in the 2010, 2007, 2006, and 2004 editions.”

They especially pointed to the fact that:

“The most notable way the U.S. differs from other industrialized countries is the absence of universal health insurance coverage.⁵ Other nations ensure the accessibility of care through universal health systems.”

They noted that this fact increases per-person medical expenses in the U.S. relative to other countries, because

“Americans were the most likely to say they had access problems related to cost. Patients in the U.S. have rapid access to specialized health care services [which are the costliest type of health care services]; however, they are less likely to report rapid access to primary care [which is the type that’s far less costly and that’s long-term far more effective at producing a healthier population, and is thus a double-whammy better solution] than people in leading countries in the study.”

Consequently, this study found (p. 13) that “health expenditures per capita, 2011” (which was the latest year) were \$8,508 for the U.S., and ranged between \$3,182 and \$5,669 among all of the other ten — all of the countries that had universal insurance. They all had universal health insurance, and also healthcare costs that were about half of America’s. Was their healthcare inferior to America’s? No; it was, to the exact contrary, uniformly superior. This same analysis found (p. 12) that the “Overall Ranking” on “Quality Care” positioned the United States dead-last.

In terms of the well-being of the general population, universal healthcare — healthcare as a right not a privilege — is unquestionably superior to the U.S. system (which system is healthcare as a privilege, not as a right). However, in terms of the well-being of the insurance-company CEOs, who are the people that control political-campaign funding (especially after the Republican Party’s 2010 Supreme Court *Citizens United* decision, which gives a corporation’s CEO untrammelled access to the corporate treasury to buy the politicians and policies he wants, irrespective of whether even the stockholders want those — it empowers CEOs, not stockholders), universal healthcare is toxic to their pay.

So: the promise was realistic in the sense of its being not only achievable, but also of its being actually achieved by the other ten countries.

However, the promise was totally impossible of being fulfilled by the health insurance plan that Obama was proposing and ended up installing. After all, his plan was never designed as a program in which every citizen receives health care as a right, and not as a privilege that depends upon the patient’s ability-to-pay. It just wasn’t anything like that — and Obama and his aides obviously knew this, but the U.S. ‘news’ media never probed or seriously questioned this serious matter in it (nor in any of the other candidates’ plans); so, the scam worked on voters: the press let the candidates fool voters. And Obama wasn’t the only practitioner of this scam: Hillary Clinton and John Edwards were making virtually the same inflated claims for virtually identical plans. Given that America’s ‘news’ media weren’t challenging it, any political candidate who would have been describing such a plan honestly would have been rejected by the voters: how would voters even know that this person was telling the truth and the others (his or her competitors) were lying? The honest candidate

would be attacking the standard proposal in a political environment where the press were basically just stenographers, not *real* journalists in a real democracy.

But, what's more is that Obama never even *intended* to deliver all of what he was promising to be a part of his plan; he especially wasn't intending to deliver on the "public option" part — the part that the insurance companies were the most concerned to prevent being included in a health-reform law.

Here is the way that Obama whittled down his proposal, from even the low real base that he was starting with:

At all periods throughout his campaign and subsequent Presidency, Obama was lying about the plan that he would propose to Congress, and about the plan that he would enact into law. Even his initial bargaining position with congressional Republicans, as the U.S. President, started without including some important things that he had been campaigning on as promises to the American people, such as universal coverage, and such as universal availability of a public insurance option in the healthcare exchanges. Furthermore, his language even in the earliest phases of his Presidency regarding the "public option" was cagily phrased so that it was essentially meaningless to anyone who examined it carefully.

On [9 September 2009](#), in his speech to a joint session of Congress, he committed himself for the first time clearly to a self-contradictory position on this matter, and so he was now publicly pushing something that clearly is impossible; yet still none of the press pointed this crucial fact (a fact of logic) out to the public. He said then:

"I have no interest in putting insurance companies out of business. They provide a legitimate service, and employ a lot of our friends and neighbors. I just want to hold them accountable. (Applause.) And the insurance reforms that I've already mentioned would do just that. But an additional step we can take to keep insurance companies honest is by making a not-for-profit public option available in the insurance exchange. (Applause.) Now, let me be clear. Let me be clear. It would only be an option for those who don't have insurance."

So, already there, he was finally ruling out the availability of the public option to compete against the insurance companies for the business of the 85% of Americans who already had insurance — it just wouldn't be available to them. Consequently, it would in no way "keep insurance companies honest." Instead of competing against private insurers, it would be available as an option only for the 15% of Americans who were currently *uninsured*. Obama was actually protecting there the profit-margins of the insurance companies, on existing insurance. Did the American press call this to the public's attention? Everybody in the public-policy community, and even intelligent journalists, recognized it immediately. (I certainly did, at the time. From that moment on, I knew that he was a fraud.) Obama was urging Congress to produce something that would contradict itself. Either the public option would be available to everyone, or else it wouldn't "keep the insurance companies honest." Nor would it, in any way, then "hold them accountable." His statement was a lie as regards both its "keep insurance companies honest," and its "hold them accountable." It was a double-lie.

Therefore, not only was Obama not pushing for universal health-insurance, but he also wasn't really pushing for anything that would "keep insurance companies honest" in the

sense of inserting into a competitive marketplace “a not-for-profit public option” which would be one of the competitors for the public’s health-insurance. This is how protective of insurance-executives’ bonuses he actually was, and how little he actually cared about health-care consumers — the public: patients.

Regarding the public option, or inclusion of an option for each American to choose a government-run insurance plan, this lie from Obama was rather fully documented by an anonymous blogger who headlined on 22 December 2009, [“President Obama: ‘I Didn’t Campaign on the Public Option’,”](#) where that lie from Obama was soundly and repeatedly exposed as being nothing but a lie. That blog-post had been precipitated by an interview with Obama which had just been published in the *Washington Post* headlining innocuously, [“Obama Rejects Criticism on Health-Care Reform Legislation,”](#) where the reporter wrote “‘I didn’t campaign on the public option,’ Obama said in the interview.” If that report wasn’t itself a lie, then the President’s assertion certainly was. While it’s true that Obama never even tried to get John Boehner or other Republicans to allow into the law a public option that the private insurance industry didn’t want to be included in the law, and that he accepted their opposition to that, right up front at the beginning of his “negotiations” on the matter, instead of his using it even as just a bargaining chip with them; he had, actually, and repeatedly, campaigned on the public option; he simply and boldly lied about that there. The public option was something that was overwhelmingly popular among the American public (which is the reason why he had campaigned on it), but that he had no intention ever of actually delivering on. ([Most polls](#) showed support for the public option ranging from half to three-quarters of the American public who had an opinion on the matter. The health insurance companies didn’t want it to be included; so, he didn’t want it, either. It’s one of the main reasons why he chose the conservative Max Baucus, instead of the liberal Ted Kennedy, to draft Obamacare. This mortified Kennedy. And Baucus did Obama’s bidding.)

One of the crucial unlinked-to sources in the lengthy blog-post [“President Obama: ‘I Didn’t Campaign on the Public Option’,”](#) was an Obama campaign document that (like virtually all of them) was soon removed from the Web because these promises by Obama were intended to be broken not fulfilled; and this document included the following statement, [as copied here into a blog-post dated 30 May 2007](#), from very early in Obama’s primary campaign against Hillary Clinton and John Edwards:

“Through the Exchange, any American will have the opportunity to enroll in the new public plan or purchase an approved private plan.”

Get that: “any American.” Not: “Let me be clear. It would only be an option for those who don’t have insurance.”

This blog-post from May 2007 opens by saying, “Senator Obama’s long-anticipated [healthcare plan](#) has finally been released.” The link provided there, to the then-Senator Obama’s just-released plan, produces only a blank now, presumably because Obama doesn’t want historians to have such an easy time tracking down the lies that he had made while he was running for office. Of course, if he should subsequently decide that he doesn’t any longer want to impede the ability of historians to nail down the frauds he made against the voting public, then one way for him to repent of them (if he even has a conscience at all) would be for him to place back up onto the Web the documents, such as that one, which expose his fraudulence. Unless the United States descends into total

dictatorship such as in North Korea or other countries that never were democracies to begin with, historians will ultimately come to recognize, anyway, that Barack Obama lied about many things, some of which were crucial. Presumably, he is merely trying to delay — not to prevent — this historical recognition. Only time will tell whether or when that recognition will come.

Investigative historian Eric Zuesse is the author, most recently, of [They're Not Even Close: The Democratic vs. Republican Economic Records, 1910-2010](#), and of [CHRIST'S VENTRILOQUISTS: The Event that Created Christianity](#).

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Eric Zuesse](#), Global Research, 2015

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Eric Zuesse](#)

About the author:

Investigative historian Eric Zuesse is the author, most recently, of [They're Not Even Close: The Democratic vs. Republican Economic Records, 1910-2010](#), and of [CHRIST'S VENTRILOQUISTS: The Event that Created Christianity](#).

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca