

Affordable Care Act is not a “success” for people in Washington

By Dr. Roger Stark, MD, FACS

The Affordable Care Act in Washington state is not a “success” in the Evergreen State, as state Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler is trying to claim. Commissioner Kreidler recently issued a news release saying the controversial Obamacare program is an enormous success in the state. The Commissioner’s office says more than 323,000 people have signed up for Obamacare in Washington.

The great majority of those who “signed up,” however, were automatically enrolled in the state’s tax-funded Medicaid entitlement program; they did not gain access to affordable private coverage through the state exchange – the primary goal of Obamacare. By claiming Obamacare as an unqualified success, the Commissioner is trying to get us to calmly accept the implementation of a massive, error-prone law people have resisted since it was driven through Congress on a party-line vote nearly four years ago.

Commissioner Kreidler, an ardent and early booster of the Affordable Care Act, appears insensitive to the real pain felt by thousands of people who lost their health coverage because of Obamacare, including, in many cases, access to their doctors. The insurance commissioner has staked his public reputation on trying to make the unpopular Obamacare law work.

A close look shows the numbers released by the commissioner’s office statements are misleading at best. Among the facts the commissioner isn’t sharing with the public:

- 290,000 Washingtonians have lost their health care coverage because of Obamacare;
- In 2014 and 2015, thousands of Washington workers are expected to receive cancellation notices, as Obamacare’s employer mandate causes companies to drop health coverage for employees;
- State officials don’t know how many of the people who have lost their health coverage are included in the 323,000 they claim have newly enrolled;
- 82% of new enrollees signed up for Medicaid, which is covered 100% by taxpayers;
- If 290,000 have lost their coverage because of Obamacare and 323,000 have signed up, the net gain is just 33,000;

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- In a harsh November ruling, Commissioner Kreidler barred thousands of Washington residents from keeping insurance plans that they liked.

The legislation isn't working for Washingtonians as promised, even as high-ranking state officials say it is. In his latest State of the Union address, President Obama said more than nine million people had signed up for health insurance as part of the ACA. Much like Insurance Commissioner Kreidler's claims, independent fact-checkers soon found the President's statistics were inaccurate.

Thousands of Washingtonians have lost health coverage they liked because of Obamacare. As a public official, the Insurance Commissioner should report the real and harmful effects the health care law is having on the people of our state.

Most Americans oppose the Affordable Care Act, and with good reason. A new approach is needed; one that expands consumer choices, reduces costs, increases competition and lets consumers shop for coverage across state lines. It is the adoption of practical, commonsense policies like these, not expanded government control, that will improve access to affordable health care for everyone.