

Discussion

Name of Student

Institutional Affiliation

2-1 Discussion

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), commonly known as Obamacare, presents a fascinating case study in how the political motivations of legislators, particularly their focus on reelection, influence policy decisions, especially in the contentious arena of healthcare reform.

Legislators' primary goal of reelection often shapes their approach to significant policy shifts like those proposed for the ACA. For many, supporting or opposing the ACA was not merely a matter of policy preference but a strategic decision weighed against the potential cost in votes. For Republicans, efforts to repeal and replace the ACA were driven by a core constituency that viewed the ACA unfavorably, seeing it as an overreach of government authority and a burden on the economy (Bronsther & Krishnamurthi, 2022). The promise to dismantle the ACA became a pivotal campaign pledge for many, particularly during the 2016 elections. Consequently, the repeated attempts to repeal the ACA under the Trump administration were not merely legislative actions but a fulfillment of campaign promises intended to secure voter support for future elections.

The cost-benefit analysis, however, for legislators did not always sway towards repeal. As the ACA embedded itself into the fabric of American healthcare, providing tangible benefits like coverage for pre-existing conditions and allowing young adults to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26, public opinion began to shift more favorably towards the ACA. Many legislators found themselves balancing the immediate benefits their constituents were receiving against the ideological and party-driven goal to overturn the legislation. The conflict was evident in instances where Republican senators from states that benefited significantly from the ACA's Medicaid expansion hesitated or voted against repeal efforts.

Analyzing voter views becomes crucial in this context. Legislators must continuously gauge how their actions will align with the needs and opinions of their constituents. For example, decisions affecting Medicare and Medicaid are deeply influenced by the demographics of a legislator's district (Rocco et al., 2020). In districts with a high proportion of elderly or low-income voters who rely heavily on these programs, strong support for policies that protect or expand Medicare and Medicaid could be a decisive factor for reelection. Conversely, in more affluent or younger districts, the focus might shift towards policies that promote healthcare savings accounts or private healthcare options.

References

Bronsther, J., & Krishnamurthi, G. (2022). Optional Legislation. *Minn. L. Rev.*, *107*, 297.

Rocco, P., Keller, A. C., & Kelly, A. S. (2020). State Politics And The Uneven Fate Of Medicaid Expansion: An examination of mechanisms that affected Medicaid expansion, including electoral competition, ballot-box initiatives, interest-group coalitions, and entrepreneurial administrators. *Health Affairs*, *39*(3), 494–501.
<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.01414>

Responses

Hello Sasha,

In terms of the political incentives underlying attempts to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, I agree with your view. The fact that lawmakers may be motivated to prioritize short-term political advantages above long-term policy benefits due to the fear of losing their base is an essential factor to consider. A representative illustration of this is the pivotal vote that Senator John McCain cast in 2017 against the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. McCain broke ranks with his party, despite the fact that he is a Republican, because he was concerned about the effect that the repeal would have on his people, especially those who would benefit from the Medicaid expansion that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) provided in Arizona. By highlighting how the perceived cost in votes owing to bad policy outcomes may sometimes outweigh party allegiance and election-driven goals, this act demonstrates how this phenomenon might occur.

Hi Gerry,

You have made an excellent argument regarding the tension that exists between the demands of the party and the advantages of the constituents. The consequences of this dynamic were readily apparent in places such as Ohio, where Republican Governor John Kasich backed the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. The choice made by Kasich was predicated on the immediate health advantages that would be provided to the inhabitants of his state, which would result in lower rates of uninsured individuals and improved health outcomes. In spite of the fact that Kasich's move was received with criticism from inside his own party, it is quite probable that it helped him strengthen his popularity among moderate voters. This demonstrates that the requirements of people may occasionally transcend party boundaries and affect policy choices. The intricacy of healthcare policy is

shown by this example, which demonstrates that political costs and benefits must be evaluated against the real health and welfare of constituents prior to making any decisions.