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OUR OPINION

How Trump, Congress can replace Obamacare together

The Affordable Care Act was a good idea poorly executed at a politically divisive time. Come Jan. 20, the Republican Party will control the federal government, and scrapping the act – which is so tied to President Barack Obama that even he calls it Obamacare – will be a top priority of President Donald Trump and probably House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell as well.

Many have long urged Congress and the White House to try to fix the ACA, believing that it would never be replaced so long as Democrats held the White House or controlled part or all of Congress. When the GOP runs Washington, a better idea is to dismantle the ACA while keeping what's best about the 2010 law.

This could well happen. There appears to be broad support among lawmakers for retaining popular ACA provisions allowing children to remain on their parents' health insurance policies until they are 26 and for banning insurers from denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions. The even better news is that there is a chance that rolling back and improving Obamacare could be a genuinely bipartisan effort, unlike the brutal 2009-2010 cage fight before the law's enactment.

Coming off an ugly campaign, that may seem unlikely. Why won't congressional Democrats behave in the same disputatious way toward a Republican president as congressional Republicans have toward Obama? Why wouldn't they proudly defend a bold initiative that has led to 20 million more Americans having health insurance? Why wouldn't Democratic senators filibuster such a bill and defy McConnell to follow in the footsteps of Nevada Democratic Sen. Harry Reid who as majority leader put some limits on the blocking tactic?

Here's why: Because while ACA has worked out reasonably well in California and some other large states, it is on its way to being a disaster in many small and midsized states, with insurers pulling out of money-hemorrhaging state exchanges, premiums soaring and deductibles going ever higher. A recent analysis predicts that by next year, in one-third of the nation, Obamacare enrollees will have only one insurer option. Bill Clinton spoke for a lot of Democrats – especially House Democrats up for re-election in 2018 – when he called what's become of the ACA “the craziest thing in the world.”

By contrast, Republicans fighting the prospect of Obamacare faced little downside because polls in 2009 showed most Americans were fairly satisfied with the health care status quo. That's not true now.

So let's not wait until Jan. 20 to get to work. Trump and Ryan have put out position papers calling for allowing insurers to offer policies in all 50 states under one federal standard. They propose giving tax credits and creating IRA-like health savings accounts to help individuals buy coverage. Republicans should ask Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., for input. The 2008 health reform proposal he helped craft was thoughtful and serious, and he has already worked with Ryan on Medicare reform.

There are many knotty problems to address. But we can do much better than a system that gives people incentives to game it by not buying insurance until they're sick and gives businesses incentives to hire part-time workers instead of full-time workers so they don't have to provide health insurance.

Democrats should join Republicans to scrap what they should and salvage what makes sense.

– THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

YOUR VIEWS

Should Obamacare be scrapped?

WRITE: Your Views, The Patriot Ledger, 400 Crown Colony Drive, Quincy, MA 02169

E-MAIL: Editpage@ledger.com

Please include your home address and telephone number

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

We welcome your letters. They should be 200 words or less and include name, address and phone number for verification. All letters must be signed.  
 E-mail: Editpage@ledger.com



Surprise over Trump's win points to problem in our culture



COMMENTARY

MARIE PEELER

Last week's U.S. presidential election represented one of the most stunning political upsets that most of us alive today have ever witnessed.

Regardless of how you voted or whether you were elated, despondent or somewhere in-between with the result, most people were genuinely surprised when they learned that Donald Trump had won the election. Even people who voted for him were surprised.

I'm not going to address the result of the election itself – this is not a political article. But it is about leadership and I do want to talk about why the results were such a breathtaking surprise.

The surprising nature of these election results is further evidence of a problem that permeates our culture. That problem is our unwillingness to respectfully hear viewpoints and ideas that oppose our own. It is a listening problem. And it is the same listening problem that a lot of leaders have in their own organizations.

I routinely encourage leaders to learn to listen and ask questions, lest they find themselves facing big surprises.

Most leaders tend to think that they do listen. Some will say that they listen to “anything that makes sense” or is “reasonable.” But, they set themselves up as the sole determinants of what is reasonable. Most people think that their own viewpoints are reasonable, even if you don't. And it seems that many people, even leaders, shut down or mount a defense as soon as they start to hear something that they

don't agree with or that they find threatening.

Instead, they should mine it.

Rather than be dismissive, probe to find out with real questions what people think. Instead of telling people what you see as obvious, learn why people experience things the way that they do. Have compassion for their point of view and encourage them to explain.

If you are the leader, you may have to do this repeatedly, because the power in your position can cause fear and people will be reluctant to believe you.

When people are too afraid to attempt honest dialogue for fear of being shut down, labeled, or worse, they don't stop believing their own point of view.

This is key. Just because you aren't hearing dissenting opinions doesn't mean they are not there waiting to spring up and surprise you. Instead, such people simply go about their business, do what they are going to do, and don't try to talk about it.

Leaders must genuinely seek opportunities to listen to every voice, and understand where it is coming from, even those that they initially disagree with. This is not the same as automatically relinquishing your beliefs. It simply means suspending your beliefs long enough to tune a

thoughtful ear to the dissenting voice, taking in what it has to say, asking genuine questions, and making every attempt to understand the speaker's position as they experience it.

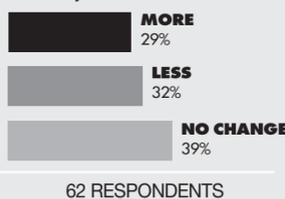
In doing so, you will find yourself better informed, in possession of critical data you may not obtain otherwise, and most relevant for today's discussion, you will experience fewer surprises.

Marie Peeler of Pembroke is founder and CEO of Peeler Associates, a firm that provides executive coaching, team building and leadership training.



THE POLL

Q Has Gov. Charlie Baker's lack of support for Donald Trump's presidential campaign made you more or less likely to vote for him in 2018?



You will find a daily poll question in the paper and at PatriotLedger.com. On Thursday, we asked about Gov. Charlie Baker. The results are presented here. Today, we're asking about President-elect Donald Trump's approach toward Russia. The results will appear online and on tomorrow's Editorial page.

Visit patriotledger.com to cast your vote in today's poll.

YOUR OPINION

A traffic law that Mass. drivers disobey

Massachusetts has long had the disgraceful reputation of having the worst drivers in the country.

Many drivers seem to take pride in breaking traffic laws. It doesn't seem to matter that they are endangering themselves as well as others.

There is one example that I have noticed recently. Where there is a traffic light that allows a right turn on red, drivers may proceed after a full stop if no traffic is coming. But if that light has a pedestrian cycle that goes to walk, all traffic must stop whether there are people in the intersection or not. No right turns are then allowed. All drivers must remain stopped until the light changes. This has been confirmed by State Police.

DONALD MALLET  
 Quincy

Liberals just can't believe Trump won

JoAnn Fitzpatrick's handwringing over the presidential elections (“President-elect Trump's ideas remain horrifying,” Nov. 12) reflects the apoplectic reaction of the left. She just can't accept the fact that rational fellow citizens could vote for Donald Trump.

She uses the terms scary, unsettling, backward looking to describe her emotional response to this unthinkable situation. This is where her problem resides. Many who voted for Trump logically saw where the country was headed and were tired of being told that their ideas were unwelcome and harmful to our future. She never considered those people.

Here's where I believe many Trump voters felt the elites from both parties were leading us: larger and unaccountable government, a country in which maybe 40 percent or better of the population is not working, where social issues were being decided by the courts rather than legislatures, where police authority was being marginalized, where executive orders foiled the rightful legislative delibera-

tion to create laws, where globalism was being promoted to the detriment of the Constitution and where the media fails to report news objectively.

This election was a vote against the arrogance of those who wish to singlehandedly implement their vision of the future. What surprised Ms. Fitzpatrick is that we voted not to go along.

TOM CHAMBERLAIN  
 Canton



Trouble already after Trump win

It has been 10 days since Donald Trump was elected president. Even before this time, we had already seen an increase in levels of bigotry, assault, harassment, and discrimination against people who do not resemble the characteristics of Trump. In case you were wondering, this is anybody who is not a white, wealthy, straight, able, Christian male.

Since Nov. 8, stories of hatred have become the dominant story throughout the nation. Students have expressed their hatred, writing racist messages on the back of bathroom doors, chanting slurs and “Build the Wall!” The words “Make America Great Again” have been spray-painted on baseball dugouts, bill-

boards, cars and homes. The hashtag #WhitesOnly is now trending.

There are a lot of us who are scared, upset, angry, frustrated, confused, and hurt. Not only does it impact us personally, but also our loved ones, our friends, and our community. We must remain allies, advocate, and stand against the racism, sexism, discrimination and oppression that so many preached no longer existed. For those who do not understand and continue to celebrate the outcome of this election, I suggest you go check your privilege.

SAVAUGHN  
 DICKERSON  
 Boston