

OPINION

A full Obamacare repeal would devastate Arizona's economy

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Opinion: Arizona would be among the hardest hit if Obamacare is repealed: 41,982 jobs lost and a jump in the unemployment rate of up to 4%.

If the Affordable Care Act is repealed, 41,982 Arizona jobs would be lost, according to the Economic Policy Institute. *(Photo: Getty Images)*

If President Trump follows through on his promise to kill the Affordable Care Act, he'll take away some of his biggest jobs successes.

It has been a talking point by him and many on the political right that ACA has hurt health care, killed job growth and led to hospital closings.

The facts say otherwise.

In fact, Arizona would be among the hardest hit if Obamacare is repealed: 160,456 Arizonans would lose the health-care coverage they now access via the [ACA marketplace](#). And 41,982 Arizona jobs would be lost, according to the [Economic Policy Institute](#).

Nationally, 1,175,524 jobs would go away if Obamacare was repealed.

Why Arizona's Senate race matters

For Arizona, the fate of Affordable Care Act may also be dependent on the 2020 special election for the U.S. Senate seat of the late John McCain, who in 2017 gave his iconic “thumbs down” gesture in a key vote toward repealing and replacing the act.

The race pits Republican Martha McSally, appointed to the seat in the interim, against Democrat Mark Kelly.

McSally [has had a nuanced position](#). A campaign ad says she is "leading the fight to cover pre-existing conditions." She has indeed offered helpful amendments to Republican replacement bills that moved the ball on their pre-existing conditions language.

But as a House member in 2015 and 2017, McSally also voted first to repeal, then to "repeal and replace," the Affordable Care Act with a "skinny repeal" – bills that, according to the fact-checking group Politifact Arizona, ["raised premiums" and overall "weakened coverage protections."](#)

Kelly's website speaks of supporting the existing ACA while introducing a public health option for all Arizonans. Of course, Kelly's actual vote has never been tested.

Obamacare remains a bad deal for healthy folks who lack employer coverage, and Democrats are winning the debate on how to fix it, Robert Robb says. Brian Snyder, Arizona Republic

Thank ACA for big job growth in health care

This much is known: Every state, plus the District of Columbia, would see job losses if the ACA were repealed. Thirty states would see upticks of unemployment rates of around 1%. The states that would be hit the hardest, with effects of up to 4%, are Montana, Rhode Island, Oregon, New Jersey, West Virginia, Kentucky, New Mexico and Arizona.

The 30 million new health insurance recipients, plus 100 million people with pre-existing conditions now covered, have created new jobs – and are a prime reason the U.S. now has a 50-year low unemployment rate of 3.5%. Unless Trump wants to see it climb to 4% and higher in most states, leave it alone.

Goldman Sachs found in a 2017 analysis that a “substantial decline in insurance coverage would also likely be associated with [a drag on health-care employment and health-care consumption.](#)”

In other words, the fewer insured there are, the fewer workers have jobs.

Health care drives a lot of economic growth

The Bureau of Labor Statistics calculated that there were 16,793,100 health-care employees in March 2010, the month that President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act. As of last month, there are 20,576,200 health-care workers.

A decade ago, there were 2.4 million more workers in retail than health care. In 2017, health care surpassed both retail and manufacturing, and has become [the largest sector of the U.S. labor force](#), according to BLS. [By 2028](#), there will be 3.4 million more health-care services jobs.

Health care was the No. 1 issue in the 2018 congressional elections and remains No. 1 now, according to a Harris poll and most others.

A court case, Texas v. United States, supported by the Trump Administration and 20 states with Republican attorneys general or governors, including Arizona, is headed for the U.S. Supreme Court.

President Trump markets his administration as a catalyst for generating millions of jobs, but if the Texas case or Congress moves against the Affordable Care Act, jobs and the economy will spiral downward – and Trump will lose his best talking point.

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