



Leading the News – October 3, 2013



On Day Two, ACA Marketplace Glitches Attributed To High Volume.



The online health insurance exchanges continued to experience technical problems on Wednesday, their second day in operation. While the state-run systems experienced some issues Wednesday, the biggest technical problems appeared to be on the Federal site. Two of the three network news broadcasts ran stories on the exchanges Wednesday evening, dedicating a total of four minutes to the coverage. Print coverage this morning is lighter than yesterday but several major papers still cover the story. The coverage is focused almost entirely on the continuing problems with the online exchanges. A few stories also note that the Administration is blaming the problems on higher-than-expected demand.



Wednesday night, the [CBS Evening News](#) reported that on its second day of operation, “many people trying to shop for insurance on the new healthcare exchanges ran into frozen websites and long delays.” Pelley added that “the main website, healthcare.gov, was overwhelmed yesterday when 4.7 million Americans tried to get on the site.” He concluded, “the Obama Administration says give the service time. It will improve.”





And [NBC Nightly News](#) reported that the White House is “still trying to fix glitches a lot of people are encountering as they try to sign up,” and that there is “still a traffic jam, especially in those 36 states where the Federal website is the only option.” Brian Williams added that “more than 6 million have tried to log on,” however, “we don’t know how many have managed to enroll.”







































The [Washington Post](#)   (10/2, Somashekhar, Kliff, Svrluga) reports that the “technical difficulties” that have arisen are due to “unexpectedly high demand.” HHS spokeswoman Joanne Peters explained, “We expect to see similar volume as yesterday, and while this overwhelming interest is continuing to cause wait times, there will be continuing improvements in the coming hours and days.”



[USA Today](#)   (10/3, Kennedy) also reports on the “high number of visitors” to the website, quoting HHS spokeswoman Erin Shields Britt, who said, “Volume at HealthCare.gov continues to be high, with 4.7 million unique visits in the first 24 hours, our call center receiving more than 190,000 calls and more than 104,000 Web chats requested. We expect to see similar volume as yesterday, and while this overwhelming interest is continuing to cause wait times, there will be continuing improvements in the coming hours and days.”











The [New York Times](#)   (10/3, Pérez-Peña, Goodnough, Pear, Subscription Publication) reports that both “Federal and state officials moved Wednesday to strengthen the computer underpinnings of the new online health exchanges,” because so far they have “proved inadequate to handle a flood of consumer inquiries.”



Similarly, the [Washington Times](#)   (10/3, Howell) reports that the Administration said the service disruptions “were due to high interest not design flaws” and urged people trying to use the online markets “to be patient.” The Times notes that if the technical problems continue, they “could spell trouble as the calendar inches toward the Dec. 15 cutoff for consumers who want to be insured by January.”













































Demonstrating the widely different interpretations of the marketplaces’ first day offered by both parties, [The Hill](#)   (10/3, Cox) “Floor Action” blog reports that Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said Wednesday “that problems with the healthcare exchange website made ‘a trip to the DMV look like a day in the park.’” Yet, [The Hill](#)   (10/3, Cox) “Floor Action” blog also reports that Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) hailed the first day, saying, “The American people are hungry to get covered with health insurance. The Affordable Care Act is up and running and people all over the country are flocking to it.”



Also reporting, from a national perspective, on the marketplace’s first day in operation, the glitches, and the high volume of visitors are [Reuters](#)   (10/3, Skinner, Gershberg, Osterman), the [Wall Street Journal](#)   (10/2, Subscription Publication), the [Los Angeles Times](#)   (10/3, Levey), [Bloomberg News](#)   (10/3, Nussbaum), the [AP](#)   (10/3, Williams, Alonso-Zaldivar), another from [Reuters](#)   (10/2, Morgan, Krauskopf), [McClatchy](#)   (10/3, Pugh), the [Washington Examiner](#)   (10/3, Hughes), [Politico](#)   (10/3, Norman, Millman), again from [Politico](#)   (10/3, Allen), [The Hill](#)   (10/3, Baker) “Healthwatch” blog, [The Hill](#)   (10/3, Garland) “Tube” blog, [CQ](#)   (10/3, Reichard, Subscription Publication), another from [CQ](#)   (10/3, Bunis, Subscription Publication), [ABC News](#)   (10/3, Moisse, Lupkin), [CNN](#)   (10/3, Pearson), [Kaiser Health News](#)   (10/3, Hancock, Evans, Galewitz, Gold, Rao), [Modern Healthcare](#)   (10/3, Evans, Subscription Publication), and [NBC News](#)   (10/3, Fox).


State-Based Exchanges See Varying Levels Of Delays, High Volume. The [Los Angeles Times](#)   (10/3, Terhune) reports that Covered California, California's health insurance exchange, "vastly overstated" its Web traffic on the first day of enrollment under the ACA. State officials say the site "got 645,000 hits during the first day of enrollment, far fewer than the 5 million it reported Tuesday." A spokesman for Covered California "said the error was the result of internal miscommunication," but added that the revised number "still represents a huge response."



Other outlets reporting from California include another piece in the [Los Angeles Times](#)   (10/3, Mason), the [San Jose \(CA\) Mercury News](#)   (10/3, Seipel), the [AP](#)   (10/3, Williams), the [Ventura County \(CA\) Star](#)   (10/3, Kisken), and [KALW-FM](#)   San Francisco (10/3).



[Politico](#)   (10/3, Kenen) carries a light-hearted report on the security questions state exchanges are using, including "What band poster did you have on your wall when you were in high school?" from New York's. Connecticut wants to know how many bones you've broken.



Regional outlets reporting from the state perspective are the [AP](#)   (10/3, Barrow) in several states, [Chicago Tribune](#)   (10/3, Frost) and the [Chicago Sun-Times](#)   (10/3, Knowles) in Illinois, the [Miami Herald](#)   (10/3, Benn) in Florida, [Kaiser Health News](#)   (10/3, Gold, Varney) in Virginia and California, the [AP](#)   (10/3, Gormley) and the [Wall Street Journal](#)   (10/3, Dawsey, Subscription Publication) in New York, the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#)   (10/3, Boulton), the [AP](#)   (10/3) in Nevada, the [Fort Worth \(TX\) Star-Telegram](#)   (10/3, Fuquay) and the [San Antonio Express-News](#)   (10/3, O'Hare) in Texas, the [Denver Post](#)   (10/3, Draper) in Colorado, the [Kaiser Health News](#)   (10/3, Galewitz) "Capsules" blog in Rhode Island, the [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)   (10/3, Toland) in Pennsylvania, the [Newark \(NJ\) Star-Ledger](#)   (10/3, Goldberg) in New Jersey, the [Deseret \(UT\) News](#)   (10/3, Leonard) and the [Salt Lake \(UT\) Tribune](#)   (10/3, Adams, Stewart) in Utah, the [Baltimore Sun](#)   (10/3, Ambrose) and another from the [Baltimore Sun](#)   (10/3, Walker) in Maryland, the [Louisville \(KY\) Courier-Journal](#)   (10/3, Wynn) in Kentucky, the [Anniston \(AL\) Star](#)   (10/3, McCreless) in Alabama, and the [New Orleans Times-Picayune](#)   (10/3, O'Donoghue) in Louisiana.



Commentary Considers First Day Of Marketplaces. A handful of outlets offered responses to the first full day of the ACA marketplace websites. Many of these were in effect reacting to the media reaction. David Wessel, the [Wall Street Journal](#)   (10/3, Subscription Publication) economics editor, argues that the ACA exchanges, though plagued by glitches and delays so far, could end up making the insurance market more competitive and fair. And this, he continues, could mean they will be permanent.



Ezra Klein and Evan Soltas, in the [Washington Post](#)   (10/2) "Wonkblog," write that while the Administration attributes the glitches in the Affordable Care Act exchanges to heavy demand, the near future will pose a critical test for the ACA's IT infrastructure: "If the error messages and slow pages are persistent problems in the coming weeks, that'll be a more serious problem. People will come back once or twice. But they won't struggle endlessly with a buggy web site."

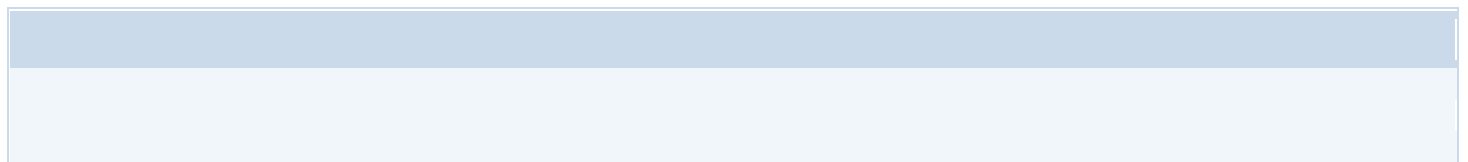
James Taranto, in his online column for the [Wall Street Journal](#)   (10/3, Subscription Publication), mocks the media's excitement over Americans signing up for health insurance under the ACA.

Similarly, in [Forbes](#)   (10/3), Dan Diamond points out the "mixed messages" the media offered yesterday about the glitches. Republicans "are calling it a snafu," while Democrats, "citing consumer demand, federal officials are calling it a victory."

Conservative commentator Michelle Malkin, in an op-ed for the [New York Post](#)   (10/3) criticizes the many "server meltdowns, error messages and security glitches" that "plagued the federal and state government Web sites as open enrollment began."

Richard Davis, a professor of political science at Brigham Young University, argues in the [Deseret \(UT\) News](#)   (10/3) that despite its "flaws," the Affordable Care Act is "here to stay." So, he concludes, "let's work together to make it better."

Finally, in an editorial, the [Raleigh \(NC\) News & Observer](#)   (10/2) writes that as the ACA kicked off, "the world did not end." After offering advice to consumers, including finding private insurance agents at the National Association of Health Underwriters' website, the paper concludes, "with time and education, it will get even better."







Legislation and Policy



Obama Tells Congressional Leaders He Will Not Negotiate To End Shutdown.

Once again on Wednesday, most news reports and analysts blamed the Federal government shutdown on Congressional Republicans' perceived intransigence. For instance, on the [CBS Evening News](#), Scott Pelley asserted, "The shutdown, as you know, is the result of Republican attempts to roll back Obamacare." However, more so than earlier in the week, the media's shorthand description of President Obama's position is that he refuses to "negotiate with Republicans." Bill Plante, also on the [CBS Evening News](#), reported that in his meeting with leaders of Congress, which was ongoing at the time, the President was "again delivering the message...that he won't negotiate with Republicans to end the shutdown." Likewise, Jonathan Karl, on [ABC World News](#), reported that the White House "says there is nothing to negotiate until the Republicans agree to fund the government with no strings attached."

Diane Sawyer, at the opening of [ABC World News](#), claimed that "Americans are asking: 'what is this costing hard working families and is it putting the country at risk?'" ABC's Jim Avila went on report that the shutdown, which he attributed to members of Congress trying to "make a political point," was endangering national security and the food supply, making it impossible for some mothers to procure baby food and causing Head Start programs to close. ABC showed an unidentified person saying, "It's GOP obstructionism in its purist form," and another commenting, "It's a crime and I'm sure most of it is the tea party." ABC did not show anyone with a negative take on the role played by the White House or Democrats in Congress.



[McClatchy](#)   (10/3, Lightman, Kumar) is reporting that prior to Wednesday evening's meeting, "Obama's aides made clear that the president planned to tell [the Congressional leaders] that he would not negotiate" an end to the shutdown, and [Reuters](#)   (10/3) uses the headline, "Obama Tells Congressional Leaders He Won't Negotiate On Shutdown, Debt" for its coverage of the day's events.



Brian Williams, at the opening of [NBC Nightly News](#), said, "The shutdown continues," and "so does the anger across this country, the frustration with Congress." Williams added that earlier in the day, the President had "expressed his exasperation at the defiance in D.C."





According to the [New York Times](#)   (10/3, Calmes, Weisman, Subscription Publication), the President told Boehner and McConnell that he "would negotiate with them only after they agreed to the funding needed to reopen the government" and increase the debt ceiling "without add-ons." The Times says the President's offer "reflected the White House view that the Republicans' strategy is failing." The Times goes on to report that Boehner, "under pressure from...conservatives and outside Tea Party groups, has declined to bring a so-called clean continuing resolution to the House for a vote because it would pass mostly with Democrats' votes and probably prompt a conservative backlash that could cost him his leadership office."



More Reports Suggest Shutdown Will End With Debt Ceiling Deal. On [NBC Nightly News](#), Chuck Todd predicted that the shutdown would "go on for days," and "merge into both the debt limit" debate. As did Todd, Jonathan Karl, on [ABC World News](#), reported that "it now looks like the standoff could go on until the next crisis point, October 17th...when the government faces default if Congress does not raise the so called debt ceiling."

Bill Plante, on the [CBS Evening News](#), reported that, earlier in the day, the President had "warned that if Republicans are unwilling to raise the nation's borrowing level when it runs out in about two weeks, and then default on US government obligations, then, in his words, 'we are in trouble.'" President Obama was shown saying that Boehner "has not been willing to say 'no' to a faction of the Republican party that are willing to burn the House down because of an obsession over my healthcare initiative."

The [AP](#)   (10/2, Pace) reports that the President says he is "willing to negotiate long-term budget issues, including savings in big spending programs like Medicare and Social Security, but said he would also want to eliminate tax loopholes to generate revenue to pay for some of his education and infrastructure priorities."

CNN/ORC Poll: 43% Say ACA Delay Is More Important Than Debt Ceiling Hike. [Politico](#)   (10/2, Kopan) reported that a new CNN/ORC poll found that when "asked what is more important for Congress to do, 51 percent said it was more important for Congress to raise the debt ceiling, compared with 43 percent that said it was more important to delay Obamacare."



"More Than 17" House Republicans Now Support Passage Of Clean CR. The [Washington Times](#)   (10/3, Dinan) says, "Republican unity is beginning to fray, with a significant number...saying they would vote for the Senate spending bill if given a chance," and, according to the [Huffington Post](#)   (10/3, Bendery), "there are now more than 17 Republicans who say they're ready



to pass a bill to fund the government with no strings attached, giving the House the votes it needs to pass a clean funding bill.” The [Huffington Post](#)   (10/2, Bendery) has a tally of the total number of House Republicans who have indicated a willingness to vote for a clean CR.



Sebelius Continues To Tout ACA As Marketplaces Open.



On Wednesday, [MSNBC's Martin Bashir](#) featured an interview with HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, discussing the first day of enrollment in the Affordable Care Act exchanges, and the continued Republican opposition to the law. Addressing those who continue to fight against the ACA, Sebelius said, “I just hope that no one is listening to that kind of nonsense. This is the law of the land. ... The best news is that now we have the website [healthcare.gov](#), up and running, people can find out for themselves, that's what I ask them to do.” Sebelius appeared on air next to Amanda Barret, who suffers from multiple sclerosis and considers the Affordable Care Act “a life or death issue.”

Economists Say It Is Too Soon To Determine ACA's Impact On Jobs.

The [New York Times](#)   (10/3, Lowrey, Harwood, Subscription Publication) reports that while there has been a great deal of criticism from Republicans of the ACA as a job killer, “to many independent economic analysts, it remains too early to tell how the sweeping Affordable Care Act will affect the jobs market.” Mark Zandi of Moody's Analytics said that because many of the law's provisions have not taken effect, “many of the assertions about how the law is slashing hours or encouraging part-time employment are not backed by statistical evidence.” While economists “said that in time the law might have an enormous and varied impact on the labor market,” current data “do not show the health law affecting job growth, wage growth or the proportion of part-timers in the labor force.”

[CQ](#)   (10/3, Reichard, Subscription Publication) reports on a study, out of the Mercer consulting firm, which “lends credence to the charge” that the Affordable Care Act is “causing a big shift to part time work.” The analysis found that 11 percent of large employers “are considering minimizing the number of workers newly eligible for coverage under the 2015 requirement ‘by cutting back on hours for at least a portion of their workforce.’” However, a similar study out of “left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities denies that a significant shift to part time work is under way because of the health care overhaul.”



Many Large Firms Blame ACA For Benefit Changes. [USA Today](#)   (10/3, O'Donnell, Mcginnis) examines whether the Affordable Care Act is really “to blame” when large companies change their health plans this fall. The piece looks into firms, including Darden Restaurants, Home Depot, Sears, and UPS, which have recently made changes to their benefits and considers what role the ACA played.

Professor: ACA Will Reduce Rewards For Working. In an op-ed for the [Wall Street Journal](#)   (10/3, Mulligan, Subscription Publication) Casey Mulligan, a professor of economics at the University of Chicago, argues that because the ACA forces employers and workers to pay full price for healthcare while providing discounts for everyone else, it will result in an increase in the marginal tax rate and reduction in the reward for working.

Public Health and Private Healthcare Systems

“Coverage Gap” In GOP-Run States Will Leave Millions Without Health Insurance.



The [CBS Evening News](#) reports all 26 states declining Medicaid expansion have Republican governors and a possible seven million people in these states have incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid, but too low to purchase a plan on the exchange. According to State Senator John Lamping (R), however, “The entire cost of Medicaid in Missouri is one-third of Missouri's budget, it's more money than we spend on K-12 education, it's three times more than we spend on higher ed. We can barely afford to be in the Medicaid program as it exists today.”



The [New York Times](#)   (10/2, Tavernise, Gebeloff, Subscription Publication) reports New York Times census data reveals the ACA will fail to help 66% of the poor blacks and single mothers and over 50% of uninsured low-wage workers. Eight million people living in Republican-controlled states that will not participate in the expansion will remain impoverished, uninsured and ineligible for help. Some states have a Medicaid income ceiling of \$11 a day. States declining the expansion host approximately 50% of the US population, 68%



of poor uninsured blacks and single mothers, and 60% of the country's uninsured working poor. This "disproportionate impact on poor blacks" have compelled civil rights leaders to complain about exclusion, as most states in the Deep South, with a high concentration of low-income African-Americans, have rejected the expansion.



[CBS News](#)   (10/2, Quijano) also reports on this story.





Politicians, Citizens Debate Missouri Medicaid Expansion.



The [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)   (10/2, Young) reports "no clear consensus" has come from Missouri State Senate hearings on whether to expand Medicaid. Each effort to cut costs has been criticized; among states that have shifted chronically ill patients to ACO programs, only 13 of 32 have saved money, increasing co-payments still leaves patients eligible for service if they cannot pay, and states paying premiums for private insurance have more control over private insurance plans than Missouri does. Other ideas include a \$20 credit on a debit card for keeping a doctor's appointment. The expansion would have added about 260,000 adults, leading State Senator Gary Romine to doubt that Medicaid expansion would result in a net increase in Federal money for the state.

The [Columbia \(MO\) Missourian](#)   (10/2, Matson) reports Washington University health economist Timothy McBride has testified to the State Senate committee that Missouri's deindustrialization has forced the uninsured rate to nearly double since 1999 and encouraged expanding Medicaid. Other witnesses included nonprofit healthcare providers, a St. Louis business group, the Consumers Council of Missouri, the Missouri Association for Social Welfare, and the Boone County Sheriff's Department. Consumers Council of Missouri VP Ed Weisbart, however, argued that strategies such as preventive care, electronic records and performance-oriented pay do not effectively reduce costs and instead encouraged creating financial incentives for doctors to work in under-served areas by reimbursing physicians at 120 percent of Medicare rates.

New Hampshire Drafts Medicaid Expansion Plan, But Outcome Remains Unclear. The [Concord \(NH\) Monitor](#)   (10/2, Leubsdorf) reports New Hampshire has developed a Medicaid expansion plan, but that voting has been postponed for a week or more. A special commission unanimously providing health coverage to New Hampshire residents aged 19 to 64 with incomes between 100 percent and 138 percent of the Federal poverty line, but the nine voting commissioners' votes are to be determined. Democratic Gov. Maggie Hassan and the Democratic-controlled House support accepting Federal money expand, but the Republican Senate blocked expansion in June.

Arizona Governor Battles Republicans Over Medicaid. The [Arizona Republic](#)   (10/2, Reinhart) reports Republicans "have no legal authority" to halt Medicaid expansion, attorneys for Gov. Jan Brewer argued in a court filing Wednesday. Fennemore Craig attorney Douglas Northrup wrote the Republican lawmakers "are a disgruntled faction within the Legislature that was outvoted by a bipartisan coalition. Legislators' alleged injury is a loss of legislative and political power."

The [Yuma \(AZ\) Sun](#)   (10/2, Fischer) and the [AP](#)   (10/3) also report on this story.

Former Senator Opposes Medicaid Expansion. Former Senator Dan Liljenquist argues in a [Deseret \(UT\) News](#)   (10/2) op-ed that expanding Medicaid would "certainly accelerate the government takeover of health care," which he opposes because approximately 400,000 Utahans earn less than 138% of the Federal poverty eligibility threshold but are currently insured. He writes, "Should Utah choose to fully expand Medicaid, every individual earning under 138 percent of the federal poverty level who goes to the exchange to shop for health care will be defaulted into the Medicaid program..., ballooning costs for Utah taxpayers, hurting doctors and hospitals because Medicaid reimbursement rates are, by far, the lowest among insurance carriers, and forcing up insurance premiums on an ever shrinking pool of people who purchase private insurance."