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# Opinion

## ACA Enrollment Surging, Even Though It Ends Dec. 15

The enrollment period to be covered by the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) began Nov. 1st, and is scheduled to end Dec. 15th, for those hoping to qualify for health care coverage beginning January 1, 2018.

The Trump Administration, which has made no secret of its wish to “repeal and replace” President Barack Obama’s signature legislative achievement, has done everything it can to force the ACA to wither on the vine by cutting the enrollment period from the previous three months, to just 45 days. And it has also cut the \$100 million Obama Administration budget to both advertise the open enrollment period, and slashed grant funding efforts for state and community organizations across the nation that reach those in dire need of all that the ACA offers through education and mobilization, by an estimated 90 percent to just \$10 million for the entire nation.

And yet, according to recent published reports, Pres. Trump’s efforts to strangle



Cash Michaels

NNPA  
Columnist

the ACA to discourage participation are coming up short. In fact, based on available numbers, people are enroll-

“Pres. Trump’s efforts to strangle the ACA to discourage participation are coming up short

ing at a higher, faster pace than last year at this time, and there’s every reason to believe that pace will continue the closer Dec. 15 comes.

While no official numbers have been released by the administration yet, *The Wash-*

ington Post (citing sources) reports that, “More than 200,000 Americans chose a plan on Nov. 1 (first day of open enrollment). That’s more than double the number of consumers who signed up on the first day of enrollment last year. More than 1 million people visited HealthCare.gov, the official federal website, the official said, which amounts to roughly a 33 percent increase in traffic compared with 2016.”

This doesn’t account for over a dozen states that have their own health insurance exchanges. However, several states, like California, New York and Connecticut, all say they are seeing more signups over last year as well.

Indeed, those wishing to enroll should go to [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) to qualify for federal tax subsidies to offset the rising cost of health insurance premiums. Those subsidies, better known as APT (Advanced Premium Tax Subsidies), make monthly premiums more affordable for most Americans who apply.

Premiums on some health

insurance plans can be subsidized as low as \$87.00 per month from a high of \$662.00, depending on the type of plan an applicant needs and signs up for.

To make sure Pres. Trump’s efforts to squash the ACA signup period fails, several advocacy groups across the nation, including the NNPA, have stepped forward, making sure that their constituencies are properly informed about all ACA deadlines and requirements.

Some states are stepping up to cover the cost of open enrollment education too, like California, adding \$5 million to its efforts.

The question now is, though it’s clear that many Americans are ignoring Trump’s efforts to kill the ACA, just how many of them are young people. There is concern in the health care community that most of the new signups are people who are older and have afflictions, versus young, healthy people who are needed in large numbers in order for the ACA to work properly by design.

## Is the FBI’s New Focus on ‘Black Identity Extremists’ the New COINTELPRO?

If you’ve been to a Black Lives Matter rally or tweeted the related hashtag recently, then the FBI might consider you a “Black Identity Extremist,” at least according to a report published by one of the nation’s top law enforcement agencies.

In October, an internal FBI report titled “Black Identity Extremists Likely Motivated to Target Law Enforcement Officers,” was leaked to the public—raising concerns of activists, civil rights groups, and policy makers, including myself and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The report concludes, based on a limited total number of incidents, that:

“...it is very likely Black Identity Extremist (BIE) perceptions of police brutality against African Americans spurred an increase in premeditated, retaliatory lethal violence against law enforcement and will very likely serve as justification for such violence. The FBI assess[es] it is very likely this increase began following the 9 August 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the subsequent Grand Jury November 2014 declination to indict the police officers involved.”

These unsubstantiated con-



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Congressional  
Black Caucus

clusions are troubling, especially in the context of the FBI’s history of targeting African American activists and leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr. and members of the Congressional Black Caucus. But what is more

“Does the FBI believe racism, injustice, and police brutality don’t exist?”

troubling is the FBI’s creation of the term “Black Identity Extremist” and the definition of it.

According to the report, Black Identity Extremists are individuals who, “in response to perceived racism and injustice,” commit violent acts in the name of those beliefs, and, in some cases, desire a “separate Black homeland...social institutions, communities, or governing organizations within the United States.”

The report continues: “The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics ‘may not’ (emphasis mine) constitute extremism, and may be constitutionally protected.”

I think the words “may not” leave people who organize under the Black Lives Matter movement and other well-meaning African American activist groups vulnerable to the type of monitoring and manipulation that the FBI engaged in as part of COINTELPRO, a counter intelligence program that unfairly and, in some cases, unlawfully destroyed movements, careers, relationships, and lives.

I’m also concerned about the FBI’s definition of “extremism.” The question becomes: What does the FBI consider extreme? The report never provides an answer to that question and further complicates the issue on page 4 in talking about the case of Micah Johnson, the African American man who shot 11 police officers in downtown Dallas, Texas, on July 7, 2016:

“Johnson searched and liked social media pages of BIE and Black separatist groups, and had been ousted from a lo-

cal BIE group for being too radical, according to an open source news article.”

I agree that Johnson was an extremist, but here are some questions I have: What group kicked him out? Was it Black Lives Matter, a non-extremist group? Does the FBI consider this group representative of extremism? If so, then its definition of Black Identity Extremists is extreme and ineffective. Also, what does the FBI mean by “perceived racism and injustice” and “perceived past police brutality incidents?” Does the FBI believe racism, injustice, and police brutality don’t exist?

Here are some other questions I have: Why is one of the most powerful federal law enforcement organizations in the nation relying on news articles to figure out whether Johnson was kicked out of a local Black Identity Extremist group? Also, if this is a problem that’s on the rise as the FBI indicates, why isn’t clear and convincing incident data illustrating this included in the report? Finally, is the FBI devoting as much time on this issue as it is on White extremism? If they are, then they are not spending their time wisely when it comes to domestic extremists.

Read the rest of this commentary at  
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