

# More than 4 in 5 enrolled in 'Obamacare' are in Trump states

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Americans in states that Donald Trump carried in his march to the White House account for more than 4 in 5 of those signed up for coverage under the health care law the president still wants to take down.

An Associated Press analysis of new figures from the government found that 7.3 million of the 8.8 million consumers signed up so far for next year come from states Trump won in the 2016 presidential election. The four states with the highest number of sign-ups — Florida, Texas, North Carolina and Georgia, accounting for nearly 3.9 million customers — were all Trump states.

"There's politics, and then there's taking care of yourself and your family," said analyst Chris Sloan of the consulting firm Avalere Health. "You can have political views about a program like the Affordable Care Act, but when you get an opportunity to get subsidized health insurance for you and your family ... politics is a distant consideration."

AP's analysis found that 11 states beat 2017's enrollment figures. Of them, eight — Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming — went for Trump, who posted double-digit victories in all but Iowa.

To be sure, Trump states are also home to many people who voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton. But the AP's analysis points to a pattern of benefits from the health law in states the president won. The premium dollars have economic



In this Oct. 12 file photo, President Donald Trump speaks before signing an executive order on health care in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington.

ripple effects, reimbursing hospitals and doctors for services that might otherwise have gone unpaid and written off as bad debt. Also, people with health insurance are better able to manage chronic medical problems, remaining productive, tax-paying members of society.

Such economic and political realities will be in the background when Congress returns in January to another installment of the nation's long-running debate over health care. Republicans and Democrats seem to have battled to a draw for now.

The year 2019 — the effective

date for repeal of the ACA's requirement that most people have coverage — is looking like a time of reckoning for the law's insurance markets, which offer subsidized private plans to people who don't have job-based coverage.

Unexpectedly strong enrollment numbers announced this week for the 39 states served by the federal HealthCare.gov website testify to consumer demand for the program and its guarantee that people with medical problems can't be turned away. Yet those numbers still lag behind last season's sign-up total.

It's unclear what the final count

for next year will be. HealthCare.gov numbers released Thursday are incomplete, and some states running their own insurance websites will continue enrolling people throughout January.

Separately, actions by the Trump administration and the GOP-led Congress are creating incentives for healthy people to stay out of the health law's insurance markets.

Starting in 2019, people won't have to worry about incurring a fine from the IRS for being uninsured, because the tax overhaul repeals that mandate. At the same time, the administration is taking regulatory

action to open a path for the sale of low-cost insurance plans that don't provide the health law's benefits or guarantees.

"The real worry for me is what the health plans do," said Sloan. "If they decide that without the mandate it's not worth staying in this market, you could end up with swaths of the country having no insurers."

Bipartisan legislation to stabilize insurance markets is still alive in Congress, but its prospects are unclear.

On Friday, Trump said he thinks repealing the mandate as part of the tax overhaul "ultimately leads to the end of Obamacare." The president continued to ignore other parts of the law that remain untouched by the tax bill, including its Medicaid expansion benefiting low-income adults and the popular protections for people with pre-existing conditions.

Others say a corner has been turned in the health care debate, but where it will end up is still uncertain.

Former President Barack Obama's law "is more durable and important to Americans in terms of getting affordable health insurance than even its advocates expected," said John McDonough, a professor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, who served as an adviser to Senate Democrats during the ACA debate more than seven years ago.

"With the end of the attempts to bring it down and to repeal it, perhaps there will be opportunities in the near future to try to actually build up and improve it, because it could use some work," he added.

## BRIEFLY

### Trump signs tax cut in "rush job" Oval Office signing event

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the end, Donald Trump's top achievement as president — a \$1.5 trillion tax overhaul — was finalized in a "rush job" of an affair. And that was OK with him.

None of the members of Congress who muscled through the biggest tax overhaul in 30 years were in the Oval Office on Friday as Trump signed the measure into law. That's because the president was not pleased with news coverage that morning questioning whether he would get the bill signed before Christmas. So he ordered up a spur-of-the-moment signing event where he ticked through what he described as the "tremendous" accomplishments of his first year in office.

"This is the capper," Trump said of the tax package, using his last moments of the year in the White House to sign the bill before flying to Florida for the holidays. He also signed a temporary spending bill to keep the government running and provide money to upgrade the nation's missile defenses.

But the tax cut was at the top of Trump's mind after months of struggling to deliver his agenda through a Republican-controlled Congress. Trump on Friday thanked the absent GOP leaders

and called the bill "something I'm very proud of."

Then, with no legislators on hand, he offered to distribute pens from his signing event to reporters assembled in the Oval Office. Clearly feeling some end-of-year cheer, the president who loves to decry "fake news" gave reporters and camera crews credit for "working very hard" and said, "We really appreciate that."

Starting next year, the new tax law will deliver big cuts to wealthy Americans and corporations, and more modest reductions to other families. The tax law is the largest since 1986, but far from the biggest in American history, as the president repeatedly claims.

### Trump signs stopgap spending bill into law to avert shutdown

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump signed a temporary spending bill into law on Friday to avert a government shutdown after the Republican-led Congress did the bare minimum in a sprint toward the holidays and punted disputes on immigration, health care and the budget to next year.

The measure had passed the House on Thursday on a 231-188 vote over Democratic opposition and then cleared the Senate, 66-32, with Democrats from Republican-

leaning states providing many of the key votes.

The stopgap legislation will keep the government from closing down at midnight Friday. It traversed a tortured path, encountering resistance from the GOP's most ardent allies of the military, as well as opposition from Democrats who demanded but were denied a vote on giving immigrants brought to the country as children and in the country illegally an opportunity to become citizens.

The wrap-up measure allows Republicans controlling Washington to savor their win on this week's \$1.5 trillion tax package — even as they kick a full lineup of leftover work into the new year. Congress will return in January facing enormous challenges on immigration, the federal budget, health care and national security along with legislation to increase the government's authority to borrow.

### Bundy mistrial draws Sessions probe, calls for broad review

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A mistrial in the federal prosecution of a family of ranchers who led an armed standoff against government agents prompted Attorney General Jeff Sessions to launch an investigation into the case and

renewed calls for a broad review of U.S. attorneys in Las Vegas.

"You can bet that, suddenly, Sessions is asking, 'Who's our U.S. attorney in Nevada?'" Rory Little, a professor at the University of California Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, said Friday. "And somebody says, 'Well, we don't have one.' And they put it on a fast-track."

Nevada has been without a top federal prosecutor since March, when Sessions, President Donald Trump's appointee, sought the resignations of 46 U.S. attorneys remaining from Barack Obama's administration.

The acting U.S. attorney led the troubled prosecution against states' rights activist Cliven Bundy, his two sons and another man in the 2014 confrontation that stopped a federal roundup of Bundy cattle from public lands.

The case has local defense lawyers urging a review of the U.S. attorney's office in Nevada. Big federal cases have collapsed in the last 15 years over prosecutors' failure to share evidence with defendants.

### UN Security Council imposes new sanctions on North Korea

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council unanimously approved tough new


sanctions against North Korea on Friday in response to its latest launch of a ballistic missile that Pyongyang says is capable of reaching anywhere on the U.S. mainland.

The resolution adopted by the council includes sharply lower limits on North Korea's refined oil imports, the return home of all North Koreans working overseas within 24 months, and a crackdown on ships smuggling banned items including coal and oil to and from the country.


But the resolution doesn't include even harsher measures sought by the Trump administration that would ban all oil imports and freeze international assets of the government and its leader, Kim Jong Un.

The resolution, drafted by the United States and negotiated with the North's closest ally China, drew criticism from Russia for the short time the 13 other council nations had to consider the draft, and last-minute changes to the text. Two of those changes were extending the deadline for North Korean workers to return home from 12 months to 24 months — which Russia said was the minimum needed — and reducing the number of North Koreans being put on the U.N. sanctions blacklist.

President Donald Trump tweeted the 15-0 vote, adding: "The World wants Peace, not Death!"



**Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Compost!**



**PLASTIC IS NO LONGER RECYCLABLE**

**WHAT:** Mixed plastics #1-#7 is no longer recyclable. Our depot collection containers for this material near Fallen Field and at the Transfer Station will be removed on or before January 1, 2018.

**WHY:** The only market for these materials was China. Effective January 1, 2018 China is implementing its "National Sword" policy to increase the environmental quality in its own country, which will stop all mixed paper and mixed plastics from being imported. This is a national and international issue, but the effects are very local. There are no markets to absorb what China has refused to accept.

**WHEN:** By January 1, 2018 the plastics collection containers will be removed and these plastics must be placed in the trash. Plastic water bottles and many other drink containers may still be taken for the \$0.10 redemption at grocery stores or redemption centers.

**WHO:** All Pendleton residents and surrounding areas who use Pendleton Sanitary Service recycling collection containers.

**OTHER COMMUNITIES:** Other communities that have "co-mingled" recycling (all recyclables in one roll cart at their home) will be very severely impacted by these market changes. Pendleton's impact is small in comparison.

**WHAT CAN I DO?:** Continue to recycle whenever and whatever is possible. Recycling is still the right thing to do — it saves energy, natural resources, and creates a sustainable future, but be very careful about contamination. If an item is questionable for recycling — "When in doubt, throw it out!" is the best policy. For complete recycling information, please visit our website at [pendletonsanitaryservice.com](http://pendletonsanitaryservice.com) or call our office at (541) 276-1271.

Pendleton Sanitary Service, Inc. is committed to offering a recycling collection program supported by our customers and turning this difficult situation into an opportunity to strengthen the future of recycling. If markets for recycled plastics become available in the future, we are committed to reinstate our collection of plastics and adapt to current market conditions.

**LOCATION: 5500 NW Rieth Road • Pendleton, OR 97801**  
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