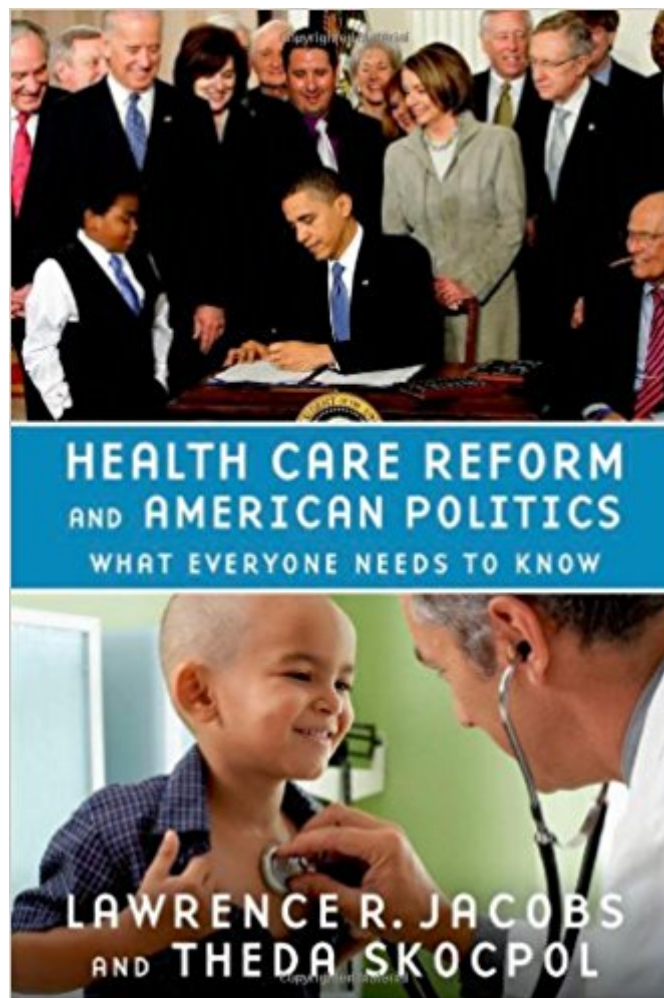




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Health Care Reform And American Politics: What Everyone Needs To Know



Synopsis

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed by President Obama in March 2010 is a landmark in U.S. social legislation. The new law extends health insurance to nearly all Americans, fulfilling a century-long quest and bringing the United States to parity with other industrial nations. Affordable Care aims to control rapidly rising health care costs and promises to make the United States more equal, reversing four decades of rising disparities between the very rich and everyone else. Millions of people of modest means will gain new benefits and protections from insurance company abuses - and the tab will be paid by privileged corporations and the very rich. How did such a bold reform effort pass in a polity wracked by partisan divisions and intense lobbying by special interests? What does Affordable Care mean - and what comes next? In *Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol--two of the nation's leading experts on politics and health care policy--provide a concise and accessible overview. They explain the political battles of 2009 and 2010, highlighting White House strategies, the deals Democrats cut with interest groups, and the impact of agitation by Tea Partiers and progressives. Jacobs and Skocpol spell out what the new law can do for everyday Americans, what it will cost, and who will pay. Above all, they explain what comes next, as critical yet often behind-the-scenes battles rage over implementing reform nationally and in the fifty states. Affordable Care might end up being weakened. But, like Social Security and Medicare, it could also gain strength and popularity as the majority of Americans learn what it can do for them.

Book Information

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WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW About This Series Who it's for: Busy people with diverse interests, ranging from college students to professionals, who wish to inform themselves in a succinct yet authoritative manner about a particular topic. What's inside: An incisive approach to a complex and timely issue, laid out in a straight-forward, question-and-answer format. Meet Our Authors Top experts in their given fields, ranging from an Economist correspondent to a director at the Council on Foreign Relations, you can trust our authors' expertise and guidance. Popular Topics in the "What Everyone Needs to Know" Series International Politics Environmental Policies World History Sciences & Math Religion & Spirituality --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Health Care Reform and American Politics provides great insight into what really happened on the road to health care reform. If you really want to know how the system works--and how it doesn't--this is the place to start."--Senator Al Franken

The authors seem to be very supportive of the Affordable Care Act (ACA... aka "Obamacare"), but such potential bias does not diminish their coverage of the subject. This isn't just a book on healthcare, it's an incredible example of the general sausage-making process that goes on between the legislative and executive branches in D.C. Even for the many conservatives who oppose the ACA, this book is instructive to what can happen when bipartisan political compromise isn't achieved. The analysis of this book makes a very strong case that the ACA would/could have been much more palatable to conservatives had Republican congressmen not chosen to step away from bipartisan conversations as the bill was being drafted. Once Scott Brown was elected to the senate, Republicans felt they had won a decisive trump card against the ACA and so refused to continue participating. But instead of having succeeded in halting the bill, Republicans effectively provided a way for Democrats to pass a more liberal piece of legislation into law. Republicans probably had a better chance of avoiding the law as it now stands had they stuck in the game and pushed for more compromise. Instead they sat on the sidelines and made petty potshots against Democrats not reading the law. The extreme polarization of U.S. politics allowed Democrats a victory on the ACA, and unfortunately Republicans will not learn to compromise next time. Romney's campaign platform of "Repeal and Replace" proves that Republicans haven't learned the lesson of the benefits of

compromise. Political processes aside, this book is also a great resource for what the ACA means to individual Americans. For those who are open-minded and willing to learn what the law is and is not really about then this book will be very informative. There are many great provisions included in the ACA that will benefit most people. The main people who might face financial harm are shareholders of the major private health insurance corporations. The "individual mandate" is actually a protection provided to these corporations so that the new law won't devastate their industry. This book provides a lot of data to build a case that the ACA could potentially reduce the deficit and help the economy. If a person is not so convinced already by the Tea Party worldview, then this book might provide some insight to the reasonableness of the ACA. For those who are adamantly opposed to the ACA then this book should be read at least as a source of counterpoint to Fox News and the massive spin campaign from the major lobbying efforts of the private health insurance industry (anyone interested in learning more about that spin campaign should read "Deadly Spin" written by industry insider Wendell Potter).

This book basically tells the reader what we already lived through during the elections and quest for health care reform. I felt that some of the terminology was stereotypical by using certain words to illustrate the President. I also thought this book didn't add much in the form of information from a policy standpoint. This book is a regurgitation of the events that led up to the passage of the Affordable Care Act and filled with a whole lot of nothing new. If you truly want a detailed overview of healthcare reform, other than the passage of ACA, try *Introduction to U.S. Health Policy: The Organization, Financing, and Delivery of Health Care in America*, you will definitely get more bang for your buck.

American voters have become much too reliant on 30-second soundbites to inform them about critical issues. For this reason, we are easily manipulated by politicians who skillfully distort the facts for no other purpose than to keep themselves and their financial backers in power, at the expense of most citizens. This book explains exactly how this type of manipulation was perpetrated with regard to the health care reform debate; how it was overcome, resulting in passage of an Act that stands to benefit nearly all stakeholders; how it can be expected to continue as politicians try to prevent implementation of the Act (not for your benefit or even that of the insurance companies -- only for the benefit of the politicians themselves); and why citizens should get involved now in ensuring full implementation of the Act. There might be some pro-Obama bias in the writing (mine, too). This is difficult for me to assess. Even if there is, this book is a great place to start in informing

oneself about a critical issue facing all of us today. You can always read another one biased in the opposite direction to balance this one out. Why is the topic of this book so critical? A recent poll showed that only 26% of those polled listed health care reform as a top priority. However, even if your employer currently provides you with health insurance at a cost to you that you find acceptable, you can expect your out-of-pocket costs to increase very dramatically in the near term if this act is not implemented. If, like me, you pay for your own insurance, you have already seen huge (in my case, 17%/year) increases in premiums over the past several years (and, importantly, not just since the vilified "Obamacare" was passed). If you currently cannot afford health insurance under the present system, you probably do, or will at some point, consider delaying needed care due to lack of funds. The book explains how people in these and other situations will be helped by the Act, without increasing the deficit. Will the Act do all that is needed to control costs? Probably not, but it is an excellent start. As the book explains, we should fix it and augment it, not tear it down and leave the average citizen with no solutions at all. The book also gives some insight into Obama's approach to politics - specifically, why he is sometimes silent on a topic upon which critics opine that he should take a strong stand. This silence may be for strategic reasons, much like in a negotiation that an ordinary citizen might engage in to buy a car. It is often advantageous to make your opponent be the first to speak about specifics. You can always respond to their offer by haggling for a better deal, but once you show what you are willing to give, your negotiation power is all but lost. The oft-cited criticism that Obama "gives in" too quickly to opponents is also addressed. According to the book, he is a pragmatist -- preferring to give a little and get most of what he wants rather than cling stubbornly to ideals and end with nothing.

This highly readable book is a brilliant political analysis of health reform, beginning with a well-researched, detailed history of the Affordable Care Act and ending with a realistic assessment of the political forces amassed against it and a moderately optimistic view of the likelihood of its implementation. In between it offers an enlightening and objective description of the Affordable Care Act's impact on ordinary Americans. The wisdom and integrity of the two authors are reflected on virtually every page. The book's foray into health economics, arguably a stretch for political scientists, is nevertheless credible. Its legal analysis is generally on target, but not sufficiently detailed to satisfy experts in health law. Although highly factual, this book is more engaging than a good novel. My only problem with it is that I had difficulty putting it down.

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