

## How Will the Health Care Law Influence the 2014 Elections?

From VOA Learning English, welcome to As It Is! I'm Mario Ritter.

Today, we hear about a warning that natural disasters stand in the way of efforts to end extreme poverty. But first, we talk to VOA's National correspondent Jim Malone about politics and the recent government shutdown in the United States. We hear how the Tea Party movement is affecting the Republican Party. And we discuss how the new health care law, widely called Obamacare, could affect elections in 2014.

### **Will Health Care Reform Reappear as a Big Issue in the 2014 Elections?**

"Welcome again, Jim. Thank you for joining us."

"Thank you, Mario."

"Now that the government shutdown is over. The question moves to: are Republicans going to be willing to threaten another shutdown in January when funding runs out again?"

"There has been some talk already by a few Republicans who might be interested in risking another shutdown. Mainly, they feel very strongly about the president's health care law. It's called the Affordable Care Act, but even the president is known to call it Obamacare.

"Particularly people like Senator Ted Cruz of Texas a well-known conservative with support from Tea Party supporters around the country. They are going to try to find a way to defeat, to defund, to somehow undermine the health care law. But I think one of the main lessons for the Republicans was that it was a risky strategy and that it probably hurt them in the end.

"So, I believe that the next confrontation between the two parties actually the Republicans, most of them, would be less supportive of shutting down the government to get their way. The poll numbers show Republicans were hurt by the role in the shutdown. And with elections coming up a year from now for Congress they need to be a bit more careful."

"Now going to the Democrats, the beginning, the implementation of the Obamacare marketplace has not gone as planned. And there have been problems. How is that going to affect Democrats going forward? Is that going to be a problem for them in the future?"

"It could be a problem for them. The president's signature achievement so far while in the White House was the health care law. There's no doubt about that. He has politically everything invested in that. He has a lot riding on that. It's very important that it succeed. And it's not just for the president that this should go well, but for his Democratic allies in Congress.

"You'll remember that when the law was passed by the Congress. It received the support of only Democrats. No Republicans supported the law. So if the implementation, the practical beginning of the law has problems, that is a problem not just for the president, but for the members of the House of Representatives, Democrats who will have to run in 2014 in the next election, and members of the Senate as well...So, they have time to fix this. But politically speaking they need to do it quickly because the public, according to the opinion polls, is already slightly against the law. They don't like it, even though they like some parts of it, so if it continues to roll out badly then support will only weaken and it could help Republicans in Congress who keep wanting to either repeal the law or change it."

"So is health care reform shaping up to be the main issue of the 2014 mid-term election?"

"I think many Republicans want to make it the key issue...As always though, in our national elections, the economy will play a big factor. If the American economy is improving, President Obama may get some credit for that and Democrats in Congress may benefit from that. So it usually is very important as to who wins elections, what the election is about.

"So if Republicans can keep democrats in a defensive way on the health care law they probably will try to make it the most important issue in the election. But, Democrats are hoping the implementation goes smoother, so that takes away an issue from the Republicans and they can talk about something else."

VOA Correspondent Jim Malone, thank you for joining us today.

## **Natural Disasters Are a Barrier to Ending Extreme Poverty**

From American politics, we turn our attention to fighting poverty around the world. A new report says natural disasters will stand in the way of ending extreme poverty unless more is done to prepare for such events. Jim Tedder has more on the story.

Britain's Overseas Development Institute, or ODI, prepared the new report. It says that droughts, floods and other natural disasters are barriers to ending extreme poverty. The ODI report defined extreme poverty as living on less than one dollar and 25 cents a day.

The report warns that governments must deal with the increased risk of disasters in some of the world's poorest areas. That means that taking steps to reduce the risk should be part of any poverty prevention program. The report predicts that, by 2030, up to 325 million extremely poor people will live in the 49 countries threatened most by natural disaster. Most of those countries are in South Asia or in Africa, south of the Sahara Desert.

Tom Mitchell is with the Overseas Development Institute. He says there is a relationship between poverty and natural disasters – or what he calls natural hazards.

“What we found is there's a very close overlap between the countries that we expect to have very high levels of poverty still in 2030 and the countries most exposed to natural hazards. And now this shouldn't really come as a surprise because we know that the poorest and most vulnerable people get hit hardest by extreme events. So there really is a very close link between poverty and disasters.”

The report says 11 countries are most at risk for poverty resulting from disasters. Eight of the 11 are in Africa. They include the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda. The Asian nations are Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. The report identified India as a country that would have large numbers of poor people at risk.

“In 2030, we expect there to still be very significant numbers of poor people living in India - possibly above a hundred million. In addition, this is a country that’s going to be extremely exposed natural hazards. It’s got very good central capacity to manage the problem. But at state level - some of which are as big as countries by themselves - the capacity is much more variable.”

Tom Mitchell says countries that need to prepare for possible disasters are getting less than \$2 million each in international aid to do so.

“Look, if you’re serious in ending extreme poverty - and that you’re serious in protecting your economic growth - then disaster risk management needs to be at the heart of your policies - needs to be at the heart of your economic growth policies - and needs to be a part of your social development and poverty reduction policies.”

The ODI report adds that disaster risk management should “focus on livelihoods as well as lives.” And the report estimates that less than one percent of official development aid is currently spent on reducing the risk of disaster.

I’m Jim Tedder.

And I’m Mario Ritter. That is As It Is for today. We welcome your comment on this program. Or go to our website, [learningenglish.voanews.com](http://learningenglish.voanews.com), and click on “Contact Us.”