

# OKLAHOMA WORKERS' MONTHLY

News for  
Oklahoma's  
Working Class



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## October 1: Government Shuts Down as Insurance Exchanges Open Up

Controversial Healthcare Law Leads to Government Chaos. *What Does it Mean for the Working Class?*

After a long game of legislative cat and mouse between Democrats in the Senate and Republicans in the House of Representatives, the U.S. federal government shut down at 12:00 AM, Eastern Time on October 1. The shut-down came after a failure of the two legislative bodies to agree on a routine budget bill to keep government agencies funded. House Republicans, taking the lead from their minority "Tea Party" faction, attached measures against the Affordable Care Act (ACA, a.k.a. "Obamacare") to the otherwise unrelated budget, leading Senate Democrats to reject it. Interestingly, October 1 also marked the opening day for the ACA's new insurance exchanges, through which the uninsured are invited to purchase private health insurance.

Perhaps the most controversial part of the ACA is the so-called "individual mandate" requiring all adults to purchase health insurance, or face a penalty on annual federal income tax. The Supreme Court upheld the individual mandate last year, justifying it as a tax. Since the ACA also sets new regulations on insurance companies requiring them to cover sick patients whom they would have otherwise denied, the legal requirement that all healthy individuals also purchase coverage assures that the large insurance corporations will not see a fall in profits due to the healthcare law. In fact, contrary to much common word in the mainstream press, insurance companies win big from the ACA and stand to potentially make record profits.

In Oklahoma, where the state government is controlled by the

Republican party, Gov. Mary Fallin and state legislators have chosen not to implement the state-level insurance exchanges mandated by the ACA. Instead, Oklahoma's insurance exchanges are to be run directly by the federal government. By contrast, an ambitious state-level health insurance exchange has been launched in Maryland, a state with its government firmly under the control of the Democrats. It is unclear at this point what the practical differences may be. Democrats have generally championed President Obama's signature healthcare law as a measure designed to assist the working class. However, authorities in Maryland recently ap-

proved measures allowing insurance companies to increase premiums on state exchanges by as much as 25%, and similar moves have been made in other Democrat-controlled states.

It remains an open question as to whether the working class will materially benefit or suffer from the ACA. The worst possible outcome for low-income working class individuals and families would be the case whereby the ACA remains unchanged in law, but would have its federal funding stripped. In this case, all adults would still be required to purchase health insurance from a private insurance corporation, but those with the least income would likely not see the promised subsidy in price. At present, this scenario appears to be the goal of Republicans in the House of Representatives. If the ACA were to simply be repealed, then the individual mandate would be canceled along with the rest of the law, leading ...



Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid

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# Understanding Ourselves in Relation to the Government

By Comrade Orson

We many times will say of this policy, or that invasion, "We bombed Libya," or, "Our government should [do this or that]." Perhaps we would be more honest with ourselves when we speak of the U.S. government not to say "our government," or, "we invaded [name of country]." Why? Because it's not our government. We don't actually have any control over it. As Jimmy Carter put it last month, "America no longer has a functioning democracy." Would he say such a thing as a joke, or, because it's a terrifying fact? What do you think?

When we talk about the course of the United States, maybe instead of saying, "we," or "our," we should say, "the government." For example, "The U.S. government invaded [name of country]." Come on! Admit it. You didn't want to drop those bombs, did you? You don't really have input in those fake elections and letters to corporate-sponsored congresspersons. Carter isn't joking. Eisenhower wasn't joking about the Military-Industrial Complex, either. The original draft of his farewell address said, "Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex," (The word "congressional" was edited out due to fears of the political repercussions.) It isn't *you* doing it. It isn't *me* doing it, either, so don't say "we." Let's try to speak of things in the most truthful way.

The psychological and social-psychological effect is important in this

change of phraseology. If we say "we" or "our" about this government, then we're psychologically inclined to feel that *its* actions are *our* actions, that *we* are responsible for *its* crimes, or that we have somehow not made the right choices at election time. Dear people: The elections are fake! No real choice or **CHANGE** is allowed through the Two Party System. The Two Party System has gradually brought us to the condition that former President Carter cites in the quotation above. No Democracy. It's time for us to stop pretending and face the fact that there is no longer a functioning democracy in America. No joke. It's real. No Democracy. This cold reality has been coming for decades, but too many rolled their eyes. "It can't happen here," they said. We can lay down and live under the rule of this Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie as long as we want to, but, we don't need to guilt and blame trip ourselves for its own crimes against humanity by saying "we" and "our".

If, on the other hand, we don't like living under this authoritarian, sadistically exploitative establishment and government, then that's another issue that we can only decide on later. Before such a step can be taken, the people must first face the reality of what this government and establishment that rules us truly is. It's not ours. It's not *we*. It is a modern form of tyranny. If I had his ear, I would ask Mr. Carter to review Karl Marx to see if his analysis of capitalism has not in fact been proven true.



Jimmy Carter appeared on July 16 as a speaker at an Atlanta meeting of a German-U.S. nonprofit called Atlantic Bridge. During his address, Carter stated, "America no longer has a functioning democracy." German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* quickly picked up the story of Carter's statement and published it online. In the following days, a handful of American news websites picked up the story from *Der Spiegel*, but the mainstream media bluntly ignored it.

Source: Michael Ventura, "The Curious Case of the Missing Quotation: Jimmy Carter says the U.S. has no functioning democracy at present, and the press goes silent," *The Austin Chronicle*, Sept. 6, 2013.

## Shutdown, Healthcare

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... back to the previous status quo. Although an outright repeal is an extremely unlikely scenario, it would most likely be more beneficial for the working class than the continuation of the individual mandate without subsidized prices.

No matter what happens, the ACA does not truly address the crisis of healthcare in the U.S. So long as the healthcare industry remains privately owned and doctors continue to be recruited almost solely from the elite class of capitalist society due to the cost of medical training, the glaring inequalities and inefficiencies of the American healthcare system will remain. Such problems are among the reasons why Cuba famously boasts a lower infant mortality rate than the U.S.

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## WOODY SEZ — by Woody Guthrie

I tuned in Sunday on the radio and heard a hole tribe of senators a making speeches — on ever conceivable subject under the sun, an' though the manner in which they brought forth their arguments, their polished wit, and subtle maneuvers, were all very entertaining, I come out of it as empty handed as i went in.

It was sort of like a hearin' the hens a cacklin' — and a running out to th barn — an' findin all of th' old clucks in a funny state of straining — loud, noisy, and plenty entertaining — but no eggs.