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# REMAPPING DEBATE

Asking "Why" and "Why Not"

## Article fails to probe potential impact of GOP plan for hearings to review health law

**Press Criticism** | Lori Bikson | Health Care, Washington Post

October 12, 2010 — It is not as though I have anything against all “what if” articles. On the contrary, imagining the consequences of a future state of affairs is essential for the making of informed choices. But a story that proposes to explore future consequences needs to follow through and do so. That is not what happened with a recent Washington Post piece on the GOP’s hope to “target” the new health-care law after the November elections.

The story includes a reference to the fact that Republicans “hope to hold oversight hearings aimed at laying the groundwork for a broad-based public repudiation of the law.” Seventeen paragraphs later, at the end of the article, we learn that “many contend” that the “more lasting effect of the election could be the opportunity it could give Republicans to hold hearings showcasing any downsides to the law.”

What might that mean? “That could include spotlighting business owners who say they are hiring fewer workers because they cannot afford to offer the health insurance that the law mandates, or people who say their premiums skyrocketed because their insurer has been required to offer broader protections.”

And the hearings could spell big problems for Democrats. The piece concludes by quoting the hypothesis of a Republican political consultant: “If they [the GOP] can show the effect of the law and then tie it back to the state of the economy, I think that would be a pretty devastating one-two punch.”

In short, we are not provided with much more than if the reporter had written, “Were hearings to have the impact that some in the GOP hope they will have, the hearings will have a big impact.”

Entirely missing is an assessment of what evidence Republicans would in fact be able to marshal at such hearings, or what counter-evidence the Democrats who supported the law (or who wanted the law to go further) might produce. On many of these issues, there cannot be a definitive answer regarding the law’s impact: many aspects of the law simply have not yet gone into effect. But there certainly were questions that could and should have been asked.

How many business owners, for example, would be able to demonstrate it was not the Great Recession, and not cost increases related to insurance company posturing, but actually new health insurance law mandates that caused them to hire fewer workers?

Would those be mandates deriving from provisions of the law already going into effect (mandates a

