

OBAMA THROWS TOP SPYING PARTNER, VERIZON, AT OBAMACARE

For the record, I hope the Administration finds a way to fix the ObamaCare website. While ObamaCare is a mix of good (Medicaid expansion, Medicare tweaks, MLR, some weakly enforceable limits on insurers) and bad (cost, corporate incentives, Caddy tax, insurance over care), if it fails it will set back efforts to improve health coverage in this country.

But I do take some of the warnings about how difficult it will be to fix the site seriously.

All that said, I'm not sure this is the "best and brightest" group of consultants Obama should have chosen to "surge" the website fix.

An informed source in the telecommunications industry said Verizon's Enterprise Solutions division has been asked by the Department of Health and Human Services to improve the performance of the HealthCare.gov site, which is a key component of the Affordable Care Act. The source spoke on condition of anonymity because the announcement had not been made official.

HHS office said Sunday the department would reach outside its government contractors to civilian companies that might be able to solve HealthCare.gov's problems more quickly.

"Our team is bringing in some of the best and brightest from both inside and outside government to scrub in with the team and help improve HealthCare.gov," an HHS blog post said on Sunday.

HHS did not respond to a request for confirmation about Verizon. The company

also declined to comment.

It makes sense for HHS to seek Verizon's help, said Aneesh Chopra, the Obama administration's former chief technology officer and now a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. "There is an existing 'best and brightest' available to call in," Chopra said. "Verizon is one of those already under contract."

Even assuming Verizon is among the most competent entities in doing this kind of fix, there are the optics.

Verizon is, after all, the entity that charges millions of Americans inflated rates even as it turns over data on all their phone based relationships on a daily basis. In addition, along with AT&T and Sprint, Verizon helps the government copy and scan up to 75% of US Internet content in search of secret selectors.

Verizon is, then, one of the worst examples of the dangerous marriage between big corporate and big government. Which perhaps makes it an appropriate entity to be tied to ObamaCare, but not one that will help ObamaCare's credibility.