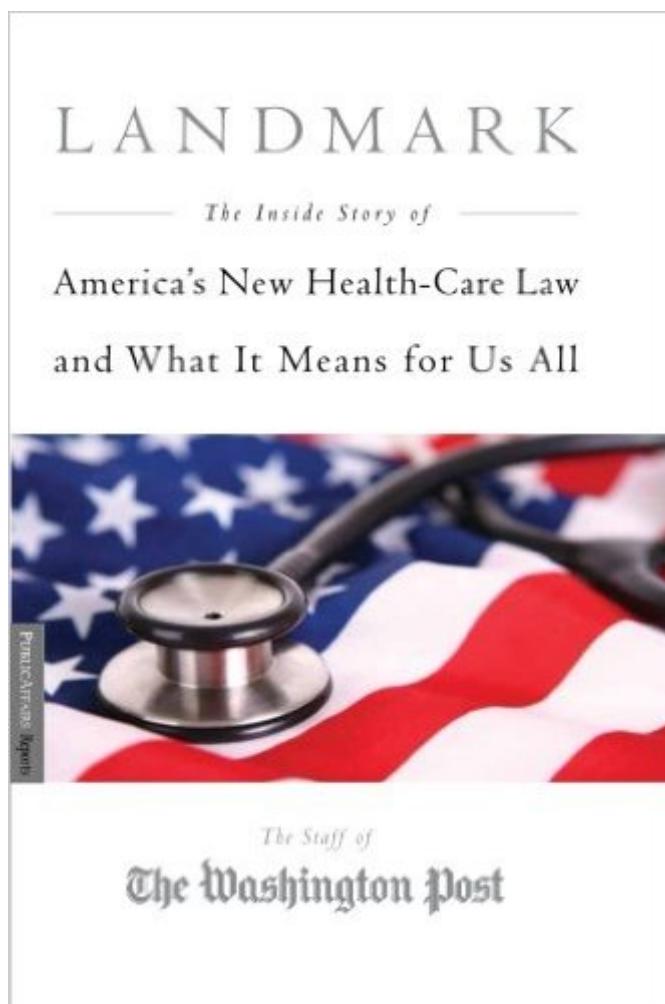


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Landmark: The Inside Story Of America's New Health-Care Law-The Affordable Care Act-and What It Means For Us All (PublicAffairs Reports)



Synopsis

The Washington Post's must-read guide to the health care overhaul. What now? Despite the rancorous, divisive, year-long debate in Washington, many Americans still don't understand what the historic overh

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Customer Reviews

I'm a family physician that has followed the healthcare reform debate closely, dating well back into the Democratic primary season when Hillary and Obama were duking it out, dating even as far back as the failed Bill and Hillary Clinton first attempt during Bill Clinton's presidency. I found *Landmark: The Inside Story of America's New Health Care Law* to give a much richer historical perspective, and to give a much better analysis of the actual impact that the bill is likely to have, than was available from the fragmented and sensational mainstream media coverage. The book is a collection of essays written by Washington Post reporters, followed by the actual text of the bill. The essays in the book are far more analytical and informative than what was typically available throughout the somewhat histrionic coverage of Republican and Democratic maneuvering to respectively block or pass the eventual bill. One could have been left with the impression, when it was all over but the shouting, that the resulting bill was weakened to the point of being inconsequential from the point of view of reform, and enormous regarding eventual cost. Read *Landmark*, and you'll have a different opinion on both those points. What was useful in the book? The many failed historical efforts to

provide some form of national healthcare coverage go back over 100 years, a battle that until this last month stymied many presidents (including Teddy Roosevelt). The historical review alone made the book a worthwhile read for me. Secondly, the authors make a convincing case that, much in contrast to the typical media coverage, this bill represents a deep and broad change in the American approach to healthcare for its citizens, far more so than the Medicare and Medicaid legislation.

Obama signed this Act into law in March 2010. Nearly a year later with politicians so polarized, it seems like a miracle that he ever did. Republicans did not want any part of health care reform. Meanwhile, Democrats often viewed a public-option as a must. The first part of the book does a good job reporting the history of this legislative miracle. It culminated soon after Scott Brown won the Massachusetts Senatorial seat and broke the Democrats filibuster proof majority. Thereafter, the Democrats pulled the nuclear option with the House approving the Senate bill, and then working out details in a separate budget reconciliation bill. The preface to the next section clearly outlines the U.S. health care problems. Our former system was broken. Our health care costs are nearly twice as much as everyone else. Among OECD countries, we have by far the largest portion of our population uninsured. Every year, 700,000 Americans file for bankruptcy because of medical bills. And, over 22,000 die because of inadequate access to health care. Among our major trading partners those respective figures are zero and zero. Also, health care costs are growing far faster than the economy. Thus, they have risen from 5.4% of GDP in 1960 to 16.2% in 2007. This trend is not sustainable. While spending so much, our health care outcomes are bad relative to other countries as shown by preventable deaths per 100,000 and infant deaths per 1,000 live births (pg. 67). The authors clarify complex issues with helpful visual aids. The timeline table (pg. 70) readily illustrates the complex phase-in of this legislation over the 2010-2014 period. The four tiers of coverage ranging from 60% of medical cost (bronze) to 90% (platinum) are well outlined (pg. 78).

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