Schumer Says Obamacare Hurt Dems: '85% of All Americans Were Fine With Their Health Care'

November 25, 2014 - 3:33 PM
By Penny Starr

(CNSNews.com) – Speaking at the National Press Club on Tuesday, Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said focusing on health care reform in 2009 was a mistake that hurt Democrats because most Americans were happy with their coverage but were unhappy with the economy.

Schumer said the health care law, popularly known as Obamacare, is "very important" but the timing was wrong, and was not at the "top of the agenda" of the American people.

"We were in the middle of recession. … People were hurting and said 'What about me? I'm losing my job,'" said Schumer, who spoke as the Democratic Policy Chairman on why his Party was defeated in the 2014 mid-term elections by Republicans.

[video:1]

"Like I said, about 85 percent of all Americans were fine with their health care in 2009, mainly because it was paid for by either the government or their employer – private sector," said Schumer. "And so the average middle-class voter, they weren't opposed to doing health care when it started out but it wasn't at the top of the agenda."

"Don't get me wrong," Schumer also said. "I think it's a good bill [Obamacare] and I'm proud to have voted for it."

"But, it should have come later," said the senator.

Schumer made those remarks during the Q-and-A portion of the event after a reporter asked him about his reference to Obamacare in his more than 50-minute speech.

"After passing the stimulus, Democrats should have continued to propose middle class-oriented programs and built on the partial success of the stimulus," Schumer said in his prepared remarks, adding that the $787-billion federal stimulus was not large enough.

"But, unfortunately, Democrats blew the opportunity the American people gave them," he said.

"We took their mandate and put all our focus on the wrong problem – health care reform," Schumer said.

While the "unfair insurance company practices" deserved attention, he noted, "It wasn't the change we were hired to make."

"Americans were crying out for an end to the recession, for better wages and more jobs; no changes in their health care," Schumer said. "This makes sense, considering that 85 percent of all Americans got their health care from either the government – Medicare or Medicaid – or their employer."

"And if health care costs were going up it didn't really affect them," Schumer said.

Schumer said if the Democrats want to win the White House in 2016 and be reinstalled as the majority party in Congress, they have to "embrace government; not run away from it."

Source URL: http://cnsnews.com/news/article/penny-starr/schumer-says-obamacare-hurt-dems-85-all-americans-were-fine-their-health