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Sebelius: Obama didn't know about website problems beforehand

By Jonathan Easley

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said Tuesday that President Obama had no prior knowledge of the problems that HealthCare.gov would face upon its rollout. [[WATCH VIDEO](#)]

video address:

<http://thehill.com/video/in-the-news/330055-sebelius-obama-didnt-know-about-website-problems-before-obamacare-launch->

Speaking on CNN's AC360, Sebelius was pressed on when the president learned about the technical issues surrounding the ObamaCare website. The Health and Human Services secretary said it "became clear" to the president "in the first couple of days," but that Obama didn't know about the problems until after the Oct. 1 rollout.

Some insurance companies were skeptical that the website would be ready to go live on Oct. 1, and new reports indicate that the site failed to accommodate a modest number of users in a test run just days before the rollout. But on Tuesday, Sebelius said delaying the Oct. 1 website rollout date was never an option.

"There are people in this country who have waited decades for affordable health coverage for themselves and their families ... people who were so eager for this to happen," she said. "And what's clear is we have a product — the product really works. ... So waiting is not really an option."

She argued that the administration could've rolled out a better product in "5 years time, but we didn't have 5 years, and certainly Americans who rely on health coverage didn't have 5 years to wait."

The president has said "nobody is madder" than he is about the botched online rollout of his signature healthcare plan, and Sebelius has been the central figure in the ensuing media and

political firestorm.

Some Republicans have called on her to resign, but on Tuesday, she said she hasn't talked to the president about that possibility.

"What I talked about is doing the job that I came here to do," she said. "This is the most important work I've ever done in my life, delivering on an historic act, making sure that we have health security for the millions of Americans."

She said Obama gave her the simple advice to "get it done."

"I think my job is to get this fully implemented and to get the website working right," she continued. "And that's really what I'm focused on. I work at the pleasure of the president, and he is singularly focused on making sure we deliver on this promise. That's what I'm committed to doing."

Sebelius reiterated that high traffic volume was responsible for some of the website's problems but said the high volume had also "exposed additional problems."

The administration has touted a "tech surge" it says is being spearheaded by "the best and the brightest" working around the clock to fix the website.

"Right now, we've asked all of our contractors to look at their teams on the ground and bring in their absolute A-team," Sebelius said. "And I am confident that that is happening every day."

The administration has said it would not provide enrollment numbers until open enrollment is complete at the end of March 2014, and Sebelius on Tuesday again declined to answer a question about how many have successfully enrolled.

She did say that nearly 20 million people have visited the website, and that about 500,000 have created accounts.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/healthwatch/health-reform-implementation/330031-sebelius-obama-didnt-know-about-website-problems-beforehand>