

Darrell Issa calls on Obamacare players to testify about 'deceptions'



The House's top investigator is calling on key Obamacare players to testify on Capitol Hill about the "deceptions" that surround the law's creation and enrollment reports.

Rep. Darrell Issa, California Republican and chairman of the House oversight committee, said Marilyn Tavenner, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, needs to explain why her agency included dental plans in the enrollment data it announced in September and before second enrollment began this month.

The issue, noticed by Mr. Issa's staff and reported Thursday by Bloomberg, inflated enrollment totals by about 400,000 and nudged the administration past a congressional budget estimate of 7 million enrollees in the law's first year of sign-ups.

Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell said the administration made a mistake, and that it should have put enrollment at 6.7 million instead of 7.1 million.

Mr. Issa also called on Jonathan Gruber, an MIT economist who advised the White House on the health care law, to explain himself after a series of videos showed him suggesting that the "stupidity of the American voter" helped Democrats pass the Affordable Care Act in 2010.

The videos played into Republican assertions that the formation of the law, passed without any GOP support, was steeped in deception and twisted in a way to make it look like an economic winner.

Mr. Issa wants both of them to testify on Dec. 9.

"From the outset, the health law has been the poster child for this administration's broken transparency promises," Mr. Issa said Thursday, before outlining a series of assertions about the law that proved untrue or problematic.

"The American people deserve honesty, transparency and respect from those who forced the federal government into their healthcare," he said. "I expect Mr. Gruber and administrator Tavenner to testify publicly next month about the arrogance and deceptions surrounding the passage and implementation of Obamacare."

Mr. Issa said Wednesday the administration did not make a mistake when it included dental plans in its Obamacare tallies in recent months — something it had not done previously.

The issue arose when Mrs. Tavenner testified before Mr. Issa's panel in September, putting enrollment at 7.3 million, although it became clear Thursday that the real figure was closer to 6.9 million.

Shortly before open enrollment kicked off last week, the administration said attrition had put the number at 7.1 million. That number, too, included dental plans, forcing officials to acknowledge this week they should have stated 6.7 million.