

Former President Barack Obama's recent denunciation of President Donald Trump's treatment of the press over-looks the aggressive steps the Justice Department took to keep information from the public during his administration. Obama also made a problematic claim that Republican "sabotage" has cost 3 million people their health insurance.

With his return to the political donnybrook on behalf of Democrats in the November elections, Obama has brought a once-familiar style back into the discourse. It's measured, nuanced and distinct from the torrent of misstatements from Trump. That doesn't mean Obama always tells the story straight.

Obama campaigned in Illinois and California last week, with more politicking planned. Here's a look at some of his remarks:

OBAMA: "It shouldn't be Democratic or Republican to say that we don't threaten the freedom of the press because they say things or publish stories we don't like. I complained plenty about Fox News, but you never heard me threaten to shut them down or call them enemies of the people." - rally Friday at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

THE FACTS: Trump may use extraordinary rhetoric to undermine trust in the press, but Obama arguably went farther - using extraordinary actions to block the flow of information to the public. The Obama administration used the 1917 Espionage Act with unprecedented vigor, prosecuting more people under that law for leaking sensitive information to the public than all previous administrations combined. Obama's Justice Department dug into confidential communications between news organizations and their sources as part of that effort.

In 2013 the Obama administration obtained the records of 20 Associated Press office phone lines and reporters' home and cell phones, seizing them without notice, as part of an investigation into the disclosure of information about a foiled al-Qaida terrorist plot.

AP was not the target of the investigation. But it called the seizure a "massive and unprecedented intrusion" into its news-gathering activities, betraying information about its operations "that the government has no conceivable right to know."

Obama's Justice Department also secretly dogged Fox News journalist James Rosen, getting his phone records, tracking his arrivals and departures at the State Department through his security-badge use, obtaining a search warrant to see his personal emails and naming him as a possible criminal conspirator in the investigation of a news leak.

"The Obama administration," The New York Times editorial board wrote at the time, "has moved beyond protecting government secrets to threatening fundamental freedoms of the press to gather news."

OBAMA: "The actions we took during that crisis returned the economy to healthy growth and initiated the longest streak of job creation on record." - Illinois rally.

THE FACTS: He's right on jobs, but whether the economy experienced "healthy growth" is a matter of dispute.

As measured by the gross domestic product, the broadest measure of the economy's output, the U.S. economy expanded at an average annual rate of 2.2 percent from 2010, after the Great Recession ended, through 2016, Obama's last year in office. That is the weakest growth of any post-recession recovery since World War II.

OBAMA: "Their sabotage of the Affordable Care Act has already cost more than 3 million Americans their health insurance. And if they're still in power next fall, you better believe they're coming at it again. They've said so." -- Illinois rally.

THE FACTS: Obama is cherry-picking survey results, overlooking a recent estimate from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that found the number of uninsured Americans basically unchanged under Trump.

He's also blaming Republicans for all the problems with health insurance, ignoring the fact that premiums started going up sharply under his watch.

Updated last month, CDC's National Health Interview Survey finds the number of uninsured no worse so far under Trump. It estimated that 28.3 million Americans of all ages were uninsured during the first three months of 2018, or 8.8 percent of the population. That compares with 28.6 million uninsured people - or 9 percent of the population - during 2016, Obama's last full year in office.

Obama's office said his reference to 3 million more uninsured comes from a major private survey of U.S. adults, the Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index.

Early this year, Gallup-Sharecare estimated the uninsured rate among adults was 12.2 percent in the last three months of 2017, an increase of 1.3 percentage points from the same period in 2016, just before Obama left office. That would translate to an estimated 3.2 million more uninsured adults during Trump's first year.

It was during that time that the new president and the GOP Congress were frantically trying to repeal "Obamacare," which would have made 20 million people or more uninsured. But they failed.

The CDC and Gallup surveys are well-regarded by experts. One difference is that the CDC's numbers include all Americans, not just adults. It's not unheard of to have differences. Another estimate, from the Census Bureau, is expected this week.

Sign-ups for government-sponsored private insurance under Obama's law show a drop under Trump, but not 3 million. Nearly 12.7 million people signed up during the 2016 open enrollment season, the last one fully under the Obama administration's control.

For 2018, despite Trump's continuing hostility toward the program, higher premiums and fewer insurers, the number was close to 11.8 million. That's about 900,000 fewer.

Enrollment through expanded Medicaid -the other major source of Obamacare coverage - appears to be stable at about 12 million people.

OBAMA: "And by the time I left office, household income was near its all-time high." - Illinois rally.

THE FACTS: That's true, though it was a long time coming. According to the Census Bureau, in 2016 the typical household earned \$59,039, adjusted for inflation, nearly matching the peak it reached in 1999. Another way of looking at those figures, of course, is that the U.S. middle class essentially went 17 years, Obama's two terms included, without a raise.

OBAMA: "When the job numbers come out, the monthly job numbers, and suddenly Republicans are saying it's a miracle, I have to kind of remind them, actually, those job numbers are the same as they were in 2015 and 2016." - Illinois rally.

THE FACTS: Obama is correct, though many economists are surprised that hiring has continued at such a solid pace after more than nine years of expansion. Job gains even picked up a bit in 2018.

Still, in 2015 employers added an average of 226,000 jobs a month. Last year, Trump's first in the White House, that figure fell to 182,000 a month. So far in 2018, hiring has come in a bit better, averaging 207,000 a month.

In some ways, Obama isn't giving himself enough credit: The strongest year for job growth since the recession was 2014, when employers added more than 250,000 on average every

month.--AP