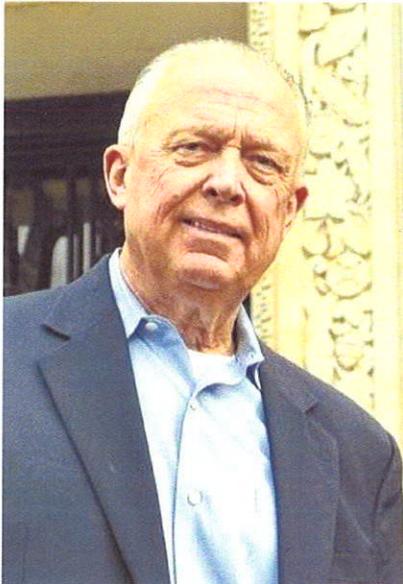


The deception of Obamacare

By Richard Eckstrom Contributing Columnist

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For those of us opposed to the concept of nationalized health care, learning the shameful way that Obamacare was forced on us was like pouring salt in an open wound.

Even after Barack Obama's election-year promise that his health care discussions would be held openly – and even televised – they were shrouded in secrecy. Details were kept from the public, and backroom favors were exchanged to gain the necessary votes of a few reluctant Democratic senators.

But worse than its total lack of transparency was the deliberate deception used to sell Obamacare to Americans. President Obama's repeated claim that "if you like your health care plan, you can keep your health care plan" – a centerpiece of his sales pitch – was patently false. Millions of Americans learned last autumn that plans they wanted to keep would be cancelled due to Obamacare.

As it turns out, most of us had no idea of the extent the White House and its allies had gone to deceive the public. That picture is clearer now, thanks to a series of recently unearthed video-recordings in which a key former White House adviser proudly credits the law's passage to its lack of transparency and to deliberate attempts to mislead voters.

The adviser, an economist named Jonathan Gruber, was reportedly paid nearly \$400,000 by the Obama administration to help craft the legislation. After its passage, he received millions more in taxpayer money to promote it.

Apparently, he has also been spending much time giving lectures on Obamacare – and frequently boasts about the secrecy and deception that was used to pass it. For example, in remarks at a health care conference last year, he gloated that Congress voted on the bill without having the opportunity to read it. "Lack of transparency is a huge political advantage," he said. "Call it the stupidity of the American voter, or whatever. But basically, that was really, really critical to getting the thing to pass."

Other recordings show Mr. Gruber recounting how he helped the Obama administration tax high-end insurance policies in a way that people don't realize they're the ones actually paying the tax hike: "It's a very clever, basic exploitation of the lack of economic understanding of the American voter," he said in a 2012 speech.

Mr. Gruber seems particularly proud that Obamacare is being financed by a scheme to hike taxes significantly on the young and healthy in a way that's disguised. "If you had a law which said that healthy people are going to pay in... and sick people get money, it would not have passed," he said.

He has since expressed regret at his comments, telling one cable network that they were made "off-the-cuff." But he hasn't renounced anything he said. As the videos show, he is unapologetic about misleading American citizens. He believes that the Administration's deception was necessary for the public's own good.

Perhaps what's most remarkable about Mr. Gruber's attitude is how it reflects the underlying philosophy of Obamacare: the idea that government knows what's best for the people, and that Washington should be empowered – and citizens disempowered – when it comes to their daily lives.

Obamacare has never been popular with the public, and Mr. Gruber's revelations are likely to cause it to fall further out of public favor. But there's something even more important at stake: public trust.

To a large degree, a leader's success depends on public trust. If voters decide to discount everything the Obama administration says for the next two

years, can anyone really blame them?

Finally, I'd like to point out that Mr. Gruber's "stupid voters" comment was ironic.

In the videos, Mr. Gruber arrogantly explains that had voters known the truth about Obamacare they wouldn't have allowed their lawmakers to pass the bill.

My reply is this: They sound pretty smart to me.

What's more, while many voters might not be as enlightened or as highly-paid as Mr. Gruber, I bet most of them have the good sense to know what to say — and what not to say — when they see a camera pointed at them.

Link:<http://www.heraldindependent.com/article/20141127/news/311279989/>

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