

# Modern Healthcare

## Prominent ACA experts to debate reform law's success

By Lisa Schencker

March 28, 2015

Two prominent voices in the debate over the legality of premium subsidies will go head to head Wednesday on the question of whether healthcare reform is succeeding, five years after the Affordable Care Act was signed into law.

Jonathan Gruber, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology health economist, and Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute, will duke it out in a debate hosted by Sun Life Financial, which will be streamed live.

Cannon, a peripatetic critic of the law, was a key influence behind the *King v. Burwell* challenge to the premium tax credits, which the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to decide in June. Gruber, who consulted in the drafting of the ACA, gained infamy in recent months after videos surfaced of him saying Democrats exploited the “stupidity of the American voter” to gain support for the law. He has since apologized.

President Barack Obama and others say it's beyond question that the law has succeeded, citing the more than 16 million previously uninsured Americans who have gained health coverage, the end to coverage denials for people with pre-existing conditions and slower healthcare spending growth. But critics say the ACA has driven up premium costs, forced many people to find new health plans and prompted employers to cut employee work hours to avoid the requirement to offer coverage to full-timers.

It's likely that Gruber and Cannon also will joust over the meaning of the six words that hold the key to Obamacare's fate in the Supreme Court case—“an Exchange established by the State.”