

# GOP intends to investigate Obamacare's union waivers

By [Matthew Boyle](#) - The Daily Caller 5:53 PM 01/28/2011

Labor unions have received [40 percent of the exemptions](#) granted by the Obama administration from certain Obamacare provisions, prompting calls from top Republicans for investigations into whether President Barack Obama's administration has offered "special treatment" to those groups in its waiver decision process.

The waivers allow certain companies and special interests, like labor unions, to delay meeting Obamacare's requirements for purchasing more health [insurance](#) for employees or members. The minimum amount of insurance group policyholders have to purchase is set to increase every year through 2014 as the Department of Health and Human Services is phasing out the annual coverage limits companies were previously allowed to provide for employees.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, Iowa Republican, said he's certain there's special treatment for the labor unions going on with these Obamacare waivers, and that it's only a matter of time before the truth comes out.

"You're going to find out that by the president doing that with the secretary of HHS, he violated one of his main principles when he [ran for office](#) — and that was that special interests were not going to have an in in his administration," Grassley said in an [interview with CNS News](#). "And this is a perfect example of special interests having an in in his administration when they get those waivers."

Cato Institute healthcare expert Michael Cannon told The Daily Caller he suspects this is the Obama administration paying back the unions.

"It smacks of corruption. Unions are more supportive of the [Democratic Party](#) and they seem to be getting favors from a Democratic administration," Cannon said in a phone interview.

Without a Republican majority in the Senate, though, Grassley lacks subpoena power, but Cannon said that hasn't been a serious weakness for Grassley in the past.

"Senator Grassley does a good job of holding different agencies feet to the fire, even when he doesn't have the subpoena power," Cannon said. "I would hope that the [House Committee](#) on Government Reform would do this as well, as they do have the subpoena power."

But for Grassley to be able to investigate corruption, he needs subpoena power. Without it, he will have to work with House Republicans, who do have subpoena power, to probe

the issue. Grassley, who is the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, said he plans to seek help from House Republicans in looking whether the Obama administration has offered unions special treatment in the waiver application process.

In the House, Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton, Michigan Republican, has already started probing the Obama administration's apparent favoritism towards unions. Upton and fellow Energy and Commerce Committee member Rep. Cliff Stearns, Florida Republican, have asked a special office of the Obama administration's health department, the Center for Consumer Information and [Insurance](#) Oversight (CCHIO), for an explanation on how it determines which companies or special interest groups get waivers approved and which ones don't.

Cannon suspects they will find some problems.

“There's no power like arbitrary power. The administration has laid out no clear rules for who gets waivers and who doesn't,” Cannon told TheDC. “If the administration uses wording like ‘under the totality of the circumstances,’ it shows that the administration doesn't have any guidelines or that they do, and they don't want to tell you.”

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