



Jonathan Gruber to face off with Michael Cannon in Obamacare showdown

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Call it an Obamacare showdown.

Two leading voices in the controversy over President Obama's signature healthcare law will face off next week at an event likely to grab widespread attention. One of them contributed to crafting the law. The other is trying to get a major part of it struck down.

Jonathan Gruber, an economics professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, will appear side-by-side with Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute. The event will take place Wednesday in New York City at a summit hosted by Sun Life Financial.

Both men, but especially Gruber, have attracted widespread media attention for their strong stances on the Affordable Care Act.

Gruber, who consulted for the White House while the law was being passed in 2010, has been one of its strongest advocates. But he faced a firestorm of criticism last summer when some of his past comments about the law surfaced.

On at least one occasion, Gruber suggested the law wouldn't have passed if not for the "stupidity" of voters. Another time, his comments appeared to uphold arguments by the law's opponents that its insurance subsidies — which the law's language says are only available to users of state-run exchanges — can't go to participants who use the federal exchange website healthcare.gov.

That question is currently being considered by the Supreme Court, which is expected to hand down a decision in June. The case, called *King v. Burwell*, has given Cannon a big platform to air his opposition to the law.

Cannon has been *King v. Burwell's* loudest champion since it first arose in lower courts and worked its way all the way up to the Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments earlier this month. If the court strikes the subsidies, millions of low and mid-income Americans who have bought health plans on healthcare.gov won't be able to afford them anymore.

"Either I will be sharing a stage with Jonathan Gruber April 1, or I am about to become the victim of the most awesome April Fools prank ever," Cannon told the *Washington Examiner*.

Gruber declined to comment.

The event will be moderated by Bloomberg's Shannon Pettypiece and include a question-and-answer session, according to Cato.