



Ohio governor proved wrong about Obamacare money

By Jason Hart

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What if Ohio's newspapers helped Gov. John Kasich crush criticism of Medicaid expansion by misleading the state about billions in Obamacare spending?

That is exactly what's been happening for the past two years, the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service has confirmed. Contrary to Kasich's assurances, rejecting the Obamacare expansion would not send Ohio tax dollars to other states.

CRS, a department of the Library of Congress providing policy guidance to members of Congress, answered questions about Obamacare — also referred to as the Affordable Care Act — in a Jan. 30 memo published by the free-market Foundation for Government Accountability.

“If a state doesn't implement the ACA Medicaid expansion, the federal funds that would have been used for that state's expansion are not being sent to another state,” CRS explained. “There is not a set amount of federal funding for Medicaid.”

“If a state hasn't implemented the ACA Medicaid expansion, the state would not receive any federal Medicaid funding for the expansion. However, this doesn't mean any additional federal Medicaid funding would be allocated to states that have implemented the expansion,” CRS clarified further.

As FGA, Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute and other center-right think tanks have been telling lawmakers since early 2013, each state's Obamacare Medicaid expansion is paid for with new federal spending. The nationwide cost of Medicaid expansion increases with every state that opts in.

Kasich and his administration have told Ohio General Assembly members the opposite. Kasich, a Republican, insists his Obamacare expansion is being paid for with Ohio tax dollars that would otherwise be sent to other states.

“The CRS memo is very important as it highlights how Medicaid is actually structured — it is an entirely open-ended program with no defined limits,” Greg Lawson, a policy analyst with the free-market Buckeye Institute, said in an email to Ohio Watchdog.

“It is flat-out inaccurate to say our money will go to other states,” Lawson said.

“The Buckeye Institute made this case throughout 2013 during the Medicaid debate and this report validates our position,” Lawson said. “The report undermines claims that if Ohio doesn’t expand Medicaid it will lose tax dollars to other states.”

“This reinforces the urgency of reforming Medicaid and getting recipients off of it as quickly as possible,” Lawson concluded. “Medicaid expansion in Ohio not only did not keep money in Ohio but instead ensured that Ohio citizens will eventually face higher taxes to pay for this program.”

During his 2013 State of the State speech, Kasich said, “if we don’t do what we should do on Medicaid, they’ll be spending it in California.”

He called the Obamacare expansion “an unprecedented opportunity to bring \$13 billion of Ohio’s tax dollars back to Ohio to solve our problem.”

Kasich has spun his Obamacare expansion as a way to bring “Ohio dollars back to Ohio” in a series of national interviews, and has done the same while promoting Obamacare in other states.

Kasich’s Obamacare expansion, meanwhile, has blown through \$2.5 billion in federal money that would otherwise not have been spent. At current enrollment, the expansion will cost federal taxpayers more than \$10 billion by June 2017.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office noted in a February 2014 budget outlook that total Medicaid spending would increase as more states implemented the Obamacare expansion. Obamacare advocates have long acknowledged this fact.

Despite all of this, Ohio newspapers have helped Kasich mislead taxpayers about billions in new federal spending because they support the Obamacare expansion.

The Kasich administration failed to respond to a request for comment on the CRS memo.