Republicans not to blame for government shutdown

By Paul Washburn

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If you ask many students about the government shut down, the kneejerk reaction is "blame the Republicans" because "they don't want people to get affordable health care" under Obamacare. The media, Democrats and general population are quick to chastise them, but fail to understand why Republicans are fed up with Obamacare and how the Democratic party is behaving.

Republicans have several issues with Obamacare (examples include businesses slashing jobs and hours, forcing people to buy things and failing to cover 11,000,000 people), but they are truly upset and angry about illegal modifications President Barack Obama has made to his signature law.

On July 3, he unilaterally delayed the Employer Mandate (which requires businesses with more than 50 employees to offer affordable health care) from 2014 to 2015 while leaving the individual mandate in place. The CATO Institute notes that Congress did not authorize the Treasury to waive the penalties or the reporting requirement.

On Aug. 1, Mr. Obama responded to complaints from Democrats that they and their staff would lose their current federal contributions ($5,000 for single, $11,000 for families), be required to sign up under the health exchanges and not afford the premiums (despite making over $170,000 a year) by unilaterally authorizing 75 percent premium subsidies (paid by the taxpayers) for all members of Congress.

The Senate constantly says the House will not negotiate despite offering no compromises itself. The House has offered several Continuing Resolutions and funding bills this past week. When the Senate said no to defund Obamacare, the House came back with a request to delay the individual mandate. This amendment was also rejected. When the House showed signs of willing to fund Obamacare as long the above mentioned subsidies were repealed, every Senate Democrat voted to keep their subsidies. When the House offered bills to fund agencies, the Democrats said needed funding, the Senate voted them down as well.

Finally, on Wednesday, CNN reporter Dana Bash and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) had an exchange about funding the National Institute of Health. Bash asked if the Senate would be willing to pass a resolution to fund the NIH, even if it would save one child's life. Senator Reid responded by asking why he would want to that, and mentioned that he had 1,100 furloughed employees with their own problems. This is contrary to Senate Democrats' beliefs; however. CNS News points out several senators demanded the NIH be funded, but all voted against the House's single resolution to fund it. The Senate has stated it will only fund the NIH if the entire government is funded as well.

This whole mess is not solely the House Republicans' fault. Senate Democrats continue to support the president's amendments to Obamacare despite them being illegal. Despite offering numerous funding bills and continuing resolutions, the Senate continues to vote against any spending bill that does not fit their exact requests, nor will they accept funding for programs they specifically say are being hurt by the shutdown. The next time someone asks who is to blame for this government shutdown, remember that the Senate has been stonewalling the Republicans as well.