



New York Times ignored Jonathan Gruber bombshell

By [T. Becket Adams](#)

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In 2014, when a tipster alerted the New York Times to a video of an Obamacare architect mocking the "stupidity of the American voter," the paper took a pass on the story.

Though the Times eventually followed up on reports of MIT economist Jonathan Gruber's now-infamous remarks on the passage of the Affordable Care Act, it did so only after he had become a national scandal.

The tipster, [Rich Weinstein](#), told the *Washington Examiner's* media desk that he originally underestimated the importance of a video he found on Nov. 2 that showed Gruber telling an audience at a 2013 health care event that Obamacare was passed into law thanks to a "[lack of transparency](#)" and the "stupidity of the American voter."

"I'm not a real reporter. I'm not a real journalist," the Philadelphia-based investment advisor joked Wednesday. "I have no idea what I'm doing."

He eventually circulated footage from the health care event on social media. Phil Kerpen of the conservative activist group American Commitment took note of Weinstein's findings and uploaded the "stupidity of the American voter" video to YouTube on Nov. 7, giving the little-known Gruber footage its first taste of public exposure.

Weinstein later shopped his findings to a Times reporter whom he had met at a conference in Washington, D.C., in October.

The New York Times' Robert Pear was the "first real journalist" that Weinstein contacted with the newly unearthed footage.

"I was at this conference trying to meet journalists that I could give this information to," Weinstein said, explaining that earlier attempts to flag Gruber comments had proved mostly unsuccessful. "I went to that conference because I knew there would probably be media people there and that's what I was trying to do."

Weinstein added, "Nobody would listen to me. So I was trying to contact journalists directly because I had this stuff."

The investment advisor said that he and the Times reporter connected at the conference, which was hosted by the Cato Institute, and they exchanged contact information.

"I sent [Pear] an email telling him he should look at these videos I found," he said.

On Nov. 9, Weinstein appears to have sent Pear a link to the Gruber video in an email that read, "Thought you'd be interested in this."

Pear, who had just [two days earlier reported](#) on separate Gruber comments regarding state health care exchanges, which were also flagged by Weinstein, responded to the email, asking, "would you happen to know the time and place of the panel discussion?"

Weinstein provided details of the 2013 health care event and the Times reporter answered with a simple, "thank you."

That was the end of their communication, Weinstein said. Pear never followed up on their conversation.

That same day, [the Daily Signal](#) published Weinstein's Gruber video in an article titled "Caught on Camera: Obamacare Architect Admits Deceiving Americans to Pass Law." The video soon ignited a national scandal.

From: Pear, Robert <ropear@nytimes.com>
To: richwein1
Sent: Sun, Nov 9, 2014 11:31 am
Subject: Re: thank you

thank you...

On Sun, Nov 9, 2014 at 11:30 AM, richwein1 wrote:
> Here's the full video. I found it last Sunday.
> The passage in question starts at around 20:30
> The time and place is in the first 10 seconds of the video:
> Annual Health Economics Conference
> Oct 17-18, 2013
> Wharton School, U of Penn.
>
> -----Original Message-----
> From: Pear, Robert <ropear@nytimes.com>
> To: richwein1
> Sent: Sun, Nov 9, 2014 11:16 am
> Subject: thank you
>
> thank you ... Would you happen to know the time and place of the panel
> discussion? ... thank you ...
> On Sun, Nov 9, 2014 at 10:56 AM, richwein1 wrote:
>> Robert:
>>
>> We met at the Cato Institute a couple of weeks back. I was talking about
>> the contract between CMS and CGI.
>>
>> Thought you'd be interested in this.
>> youtu.be/G790p0LcgbI
>>
>> If this isn't a complete slap in the face of the American voter, nothing
>> is.
>> He calls the American voter "Stupid" and explains how lack of transparency
>> get the ACA passed.
>> This video should be seen by EVERY AMERICAN.

The New York Times didn't report on Gruber's "lack of transparency" remarks until Nov. 12.

By then, it was already a major news event.

When the Times eventually caught up with the story, it did so in an Upshot post titled "[The Jonathan Gruber Controversy and Washington's Dirty Little Secret](#)." The Times' Neil Irwin wrote that the MIT economist had merely exposed, "something sordid yet completely commonplace about how Congress makes policy of all types."

The Grey Lady then followed up on Nov. 14 with another Upshot article, titled "The Policy at the Heart of the Jonathan Gruber Controversy," explaining that the health economist was merely trying to explain how Congress works.

A separate article published Nov. 14 characterized Gruber simply as a "[supporter](#)" of Obamacare. The Times also put out a blog post explaining which cocktail would best pair with news of Gruber's controversial remarks.

On Nov. 17, the Times editorial board released an op-ed, titled "[The Impolitic Jonathan Gruber](#)," wherein they downplayed the economist's role in shaping Obamacare, dinged Republicans for "crowing" over his remarks and stated flatly that there was no "lack of transparency" in the health care law's passage.

The story of Gruber's remarks on the Affordable Care Act would go on to embarrass the Obama administration and its allies, forcing several Democratic lawmakers to deny even knowing of the

once-lauded economist. Republican lawmakers even held congressional hearings in response to the newly unearthed Gruber's comments.

These embarrassments would continue well after the first video surfaced thanks in part to [Weinstein's continued](#) work uncovering unflattering videos of Gruber's cringe-worthy public statements. The "[mild-mannered](#)" Philadelphian is now regarded as something of an expert on all things Gruber.

For Kerpen, the Times appears to have demonstrated some seriously flawed news judgment.

"The New York Times has an ideological agenda when it comes to reporting on health care and especially on Obamacare," he told the *Examiner*. "Whether it was deliberate [to pass on the story] or whether it was just a decision to say it wasn't a real news story, really says something about their news judgment."

"[The Times] could've owned what ended up being a national news story for almost a month. They missed out on a huge story," Kerpen said. "If Robert Pear actually watched the video and decided, 'This isn't newsworthy,' I think it would be a pretty clear indication that ideology trumped business interests."

Neither Pear nor multiple Times spokespersons responded to the *Examiner's* requests for comment.