

## Democratic states reap benefits from Obamacare spending

By: Michael Bastasch – July 3, 2013

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Thanks to Obamacare, Democratic states are raking in the federal grant dollars compared to Republican states.

The disparity occurred after blue states moved quickly to implement the health care exchanges, while Republicans resisted.

According to data collected by the Government Accountability Office, the top recipients of nearly \$3.7 billion in Health and Human Services grants were overwhelmingly states that went for Barack Obama in the 2008 and 2012 elections.

California, the top recipient, received more than \$910 million in HHS grants for its state-based health care exchange. New York has seen nearly \$370 million in HHS grants as of March 2013. Oregon received more than \$305 million in HHS grants, while Kentucky — the only red state in the top ten — got about \$253 million.

However, Kentucky's Democratic Gov. Steve Beshear created the state's health exchange through executive order after the Supreme Court upheld the president's health care law last year.

"States that received most grants are those that established state-based exchanges or at least partially state-operated ones, so not particularly surprising," Michael Tanner, senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute, told The Daily Caller News Foundation.

Tanner added that many Republican-led states have opted to not create health exchanges, while many Democratic states moved quickly to establish them.

California became the first state to set up an exchange in 2010 when then Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed legislation passed by the Democratic-controlled legislature to create the state's exchange.

Oregon Democratic Gov. John Kitzhaber signed legislation into law that created the state's exchange in June 2011, and Massachusetts already had a state-run health insurance system that was established by Republican Gov. Mitt Romney in 2006.

Democratic governors in Maryland and Washington signed legislation to create exchanges in April 2011 and May 2011, respectively.

Republican-controlled Florida opted not to create an exchange in December 2012 despite the backing of the GOP governor. Florida led the legal battle against the Affordable Care Act. The state returned the \$1 million it received for an exchange.

Republican-led Texas also opted not to create an exchange in July 2012 — it was also part of the lawsuit against Obamacare. Like Florida, Texas gave back nearly all of the \$1 million it received from HHS.

Oklahoma created a special commission to give recommendations to the state legislature and the government about setting up exchanges, but the state's Republican governor announced in November 2012 that no state exchange would be created and gave back most of the more than \$55.6 million received from HHS.

Other governors also took federal money to study a state-based exchange, only to ultimately decide against implementing one.

“In many cases, governors took the money, did the study and then said ‘no,’” Tanner added.

The administration announced Tuesday that the Obamacare employer mandate will be delayed until 2015.