



Bobby Harrell Secretly Pushing “Obamacare” Medicaid Expansion

By fitsnews • on September 13, 2012

HOUSE SPEAKER STRATEGIZING WITH OTHER “GOP” LEADERS TO ACCEPT NEW FEDERAL MANDATES

Three years ago “Republicans” in the S.C. General Assembly (including then-S.C. Rep. Nikki Haley) railed against the passage of U.S. President Barack Obama’s “stimulus.” However they eagerly lapped up these bureaucratic bailout funds the second they became available – and successfully fought S.C. Gov. Mark Sanford when he tried to block a \$700 million slice of the \$4.25 billion in “stimulus” funds spent in the Palmetto State.

Ready for a repeat of that debate?

Sources within the S.C. House “Republican” Caucus tell FITS that Speaker Bobby Harrell (RINO-Charleston) and Ways and Means chairman Brian White (RINO-Anderson) are working hand-in-glove with the state’s health care lobby on a plan to ensure that the Palmetto State “opts in” on a key component of “Obamacare.” Assuming they are successful, South Carolina will be looking at yet another massive expansion of its already soaring Medicaid population.

For those of you who didn’t read the fine print of the recent U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to uphold Obama’s socialized medicine law (don’t worry, we didn’t either), one bit of good news involved the states’ ability to opt-out of Obamacare’s onerous Medicaid expansion. Specifically, the court ruled that states do not have to expand their Medicaid rolls in conjunction with the new law if they don’t want to – which would basically block half of the new entitlement spending associated with the law.

Refusing to participate in Obamacare’s health care exchanges would block the other half.

“States are really in the driver’s seat here,” explains Michael Cannon of the Cato Institute. “They can effectively stop the new spending under this law.”

So ... are South Carolina “Republicans” – all of whom have railed against Obamacare until they were blue in the face – rushing to quash this massive entitlement expansion?

Of course not ... in fact GOP leaders are currently formulating a plan (and lining up the necessary votes) to make sure they can push the expansion through.

“Harrell and White are both feeling heat from the health care lobby to take the Obamacare expansion,” one source familiar with the GOP Caucus’ internal discussions tells FITS. “Harrell wants to appear to be fighting it, but quietly wants it to pass.”

Applying the most pressure on the “GOP” leadership? The S.C. Hospital Association – a powerful lobbying group that has contributed money to Harrell and a host of other Republican politicians (and political action committees). Of course Harrell – who owns a drug company that does business with the state – would also likely receive significant financial benefit from the expansion.

Despite previous conflicted stances on Obamacare – and a tortured tap dance around her chosen candidate Mitt Romney’s support for socialized medicine – S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley is on the record opposing this Medicaid expansion.

“We’re not going to shove more South Carolinians into a broken system that further ties our hands when we know the best way to find South Carolina solutions for South Carolina health problems is through the flexibility that block grants provide,” her spokesman, Rob Godfrey, told *The (Charleston, S.C.) Post and Courier*.

Good ... although Harrell and White may have found a way around Haley’s opposition.

With all 46 Democrats as well as an estimated 15-20 “Republicans” reportedly on board with the Medicaid expansion, Harrell and White may already have just enough votes to block any state spending plan that doesn’t include the “opt in.”

“This coalition could keep a budget from being passed if (the expansion) is not in there,” one GOP lawmaker tells FITS. “That’s a train wreck which could ensnare Haley because she will have to veto the entire Medicaid budget based on the way it is going to be placed.”

Hopefully our efforts – and the efforts of others – to expose this plan will be sufficient to shame these rogue “Republicans” into doing the right thing and voting to opt out of the Obamacare Medicaid expansion. In fact one House Republican tells FITS that if sufficient light is shone on this issue, it could create serious problems for Harrell.

“He is in a box,” the lawmaker told us. “This could be a problem for him getting reelected as speaker – if there was a candidate out there to take advantage of it.”

It’s also worth noting that a year ago legislation in the S.C. House of Representatives that would have established Obamacare exchanges was sailing along – with numerous “Republican” sponsors – until the S.C. Tea Party caught wind of it and threatened to vote out GOP lawmakers who supported it.

So there’s a precedent for blocking this sort of thing ...