

# GANNETT

## Obama's Rx for whiny lawmakers is illegal

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In 2009 and 2010, the Obama administration and Democratic members of Congress said the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act—widely known as Obamacare—would make health insurance affordable for all.

Ironically, President Barack Obama has used an extreme measure to spare lawmakers and their staff members an Obamacare-induced increase in the cost of insurance.

Lawmakers and their aides are insured through the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program. The government subsidizes more than 75 percent of their premiums.

Under Obamacare, lawmakers and staffers must be insured through exchanges by Jan. 1, 2014. There was no provision for government subsidies.

Michael F. Cannon, health-policy studies director at the Cato Institute, pointed out in a National Review Online column that the lack of subsidies would result in lawmakers and aides paying \$5,000 a year for an individual plan and \$11,000 for a family plan.

An Aug. 5 column by Paul Gigot in The Wall Street Journal editorial observed that this fact resulted in “a full wig out on Capitol Hill, with members of both parties fretting about ‘brain drain’ as staff face higher health-care costs. Democrats in particular begged the White House for help.”

The howls of protest prompted Obama to persuade the U.S. Office of Personnel Management to allow subsidies for lawmakers and their aides when they use the exchanges. The Journal column pointed out the subsidies will be comparable to what the Capitol Hill gang currently gets, and that President Obama’s stunt is illegal because substantial changes to the law have to be made via legislation.

This affair is a disgrace. For better or worse, Obamacare is the law, and everyone has to comply with it. That members of Congress whined—about a provision they approved—and that Obama took care of them epitomizes arrogance. President Obama’s use of an illegal tactic makes the matter all the more shameful. His behavior and that of Congress set a poor example for all federal employees.

The machinations are gratuitously insulting to average Americans who face rising costs, reduced work hours, taxes and fees because of Obamacare.

As the Journal column asserted, “You can bet Democrats will never extend to ordinary Americans the same fixes that they are now claiming for themselves. The real class divide in President Obama’s America is between the political class and everyone else.”

So much for the laws of the land being “for the people.”

This episode leaves absolutely no doubt that Obamacare’s supporters didn’t know what they were doing when they crafted it.