



## Ohio's Cheerleader for Big Government, John "Barack" Kasich

Daniel J. Mitchell | Oct 29, 2013

I'm glad I work for a principled and libertarian organization. At the Cato Institute, there's never any pressure to say or do the wrong thing for partisan reasons.

When Republicans screw up, I don't have to think twice about exposing their misdeeds.

I have repeatedly criticized President Bush (and his former top aide) for expanding the burden of government. Buying votes with other people's money isn't compassionate.

I have excoriated former GOP Hill staffers who became lobbyists for various special interests groups looking to fleece taxpayers. Stealing is wrong, even when you get a lot of money to use government as middleman.

I have slammed a former Reagan Administration official for defending earmarks. I think it is morally offensive that he gets rich by facilitating the transfer of money from taxpayers to powerful interest groups.

I have condemned the former Senate Republican leader for defending Obamacare. I think it is disgusting that he puts his lobbying income ahead of America's best interests.

I have denounced Illinois Republican legislators for killing school choice. I think it is downright nauseating that they condemn inner-city children to terrible schools in exchange for campaign contributions from teacher unions.

And I have pointed out that statist policies don't become acceptable merely because they come from Republican presidential candidates. The road to serfdom oftentimes is bipartisan.

We now have another candidate for our "Republican Hall of Shame." The governor of Ohio, John Kasich, is embracing Obamacare. Moreover, not only does he want bad healthcare policy, but he's using third-world tactics and making morally reprehensible arguments.

The *Wall Street Journal* savages Kasich in a stinging editorial. Here's a key excerpt that explains the overall situation.

...there are still a few disciples with faith in an ObamaCare higher power, and one of them happens to run Ohio. Governor John Kasich is so fervent a believer that he is even abusing his

executive power to join the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion. Not to be sacrilegious, but the Republican used to know better. Now Mr. Kasich seems to view signing up for this part of ObamaCare as an act of Christian charity and has literally all but claimed that God told him to do so.

But Gov. Kasich has a slight problem. The legislature hasn't approved this budget-busting part of Obamacare. So Kasich has decided that he can arbitrarily change policy, just like Obama did with the employer mandate and the Obamacare exemption for Capitol Hill.

The problem is that his evangelizing failed to convert the Ohio legislature, which is run by Republicans who understand the brutal budget and regulatory realities of participating in new Medicaid. So Mr. Kasich simply decided to cut out Ohio's elected representatives and expand Medicaid by himself. ...he appealed to an obscure seven-member state panel called the Controlling Board, which oversees certain state capital expenditures and can receive or make grants. ...Mr. Kasich asked the panel to approve \$2.56 billion in federal funding, and then he'll lift eligibility levels via executive fiat. It's a gambit worthy of President Obama, who also asserts unilateral powers to suspend laws that displease him and bypass Congress.

But what's really nauseating is that Kasich equates big government and welfare spending with religious values.

Mr. Kasich really must feel like he's guided by the Holy Spirit... "When you die and get to the meeting with St. Peter, he's probably not going to ask you much about what you did about keeping government small. But he is going to ask you what you did for the poor," to quote one of his favorite lines.

I suppose I could make a joke about communists presumably being super religious if you use this twisted metric, but there's a serious point to be made. I'm not a religious scholar, but I wrote several years ago that, "Doesn't Christianity (and, I assume, Judaism and other faiths) require individuals – using free will – to act charitably? Using the coercive power of government to forcibly redistribute other people's money, by contrast, is moral preening at best."

Moreover, Kasich must be delusional if he thinks making government bigger is good for the poor. Redistribution traps the poor in dependency and a larger public sector hinders economic growth, making life even more difficult for the less fortunate.

Heck, just compare Hong Kong and Argentina over the past 50-plus years and ask yourself which jurisdiction afforded more opportunity for those trying to climb the economic ladder.

Fortunately, the battle isn't over yet.

Thirty-nine House Republicans signed a formal protest and some of them are threatening to sue, and well they should. They argue that circumventing the legislature subverts the Ohio constitution's separation of powers and exceeds the statutory legal authorities of the Controlling Board, which is supposed to "take no action which does not carry out the legislative intent of the General Assembly."

I don't know whether a legal case will be successful, but I can share data showing that Ohio already is in deep fiscal trouble.

It ranks 39th in the Tax Foundation's State Business Tax Climate Index.

It was the 7th-worst state on controlling spending over the past decade.

It ranks in the bottom 10 on measures of bureaucrats to teachers.

It was listed as one of America's 11 states facing an economic death spiral.

And John "Barack" Kasich thinks he'll make Ohio better by adding an additional layer of government spending to finance Obamacare expansion?!?

What makes this situation so sad is that Kasich was Chairman of the House Budget Committee in the mid-1990s, so he deserves some of the credit for restraining federal spending during that period, a very successful policy that led to better economic performance and budget surpluses.

P.S. Kasich's push to expand Medicaid shows one of the reasons the program should be reformed. He's being lured by the promise that Washington will pick up the entire tab for the first few years. Afterwards, state taxpayers will get saddled with some of the burden, but Kasich probably assumes he won't be around to deal with that problem. This is why the entire program should be block-granted to the states. If Kasich really thinks God wants a bigger Medicaid system, he should go to Ohio voters and ask them to pay for it.