



## ***GOP lawmakers join challenge against health care reform***

Written by Scott Wartman  
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From staff and Associated Press reports:

Most Republican state legislators in Kentucky signed a legal brief in support of a lawsuit challenging President Barack Obama's health care reform.

Of the 59 Kentucky state legislators that signed the brief, most were Republican, including all 10 Republican state legislators in Boone, Kenton and Campbell counties. More than 300 lawmakers from 17 states signed the friend-of-the-court brief an attorney for the libertarian Cato Institute filed on Monday with the U.S. Supreme Court.

The brief and the lawmakers that signed the brief contend the health care reform violates the U.S. Constitution's commerce clause by requiring people to purchase insurance starting in 2014 or pay a penalty.

"It is clearly the lynchpin of the Obamacare health care reform," said State Rep. Joe Fischer, R-Fort Thomas. "Without the mandatory financing plan through the individual mandate, the foundation of the program falls. It forces people to purchase a product for services they may not want."

The lawmakers hope their signatures helps convince the court system to declare the health care reform unconstitutional and saw it as a way for the Republicans in Kentucky to participate in the lawsuit. Many Republicans expressed frustration

that Kentucky's Democratic Attorney General Jack Conway hasn't joined attorneys general from other states in the lawsuit against the health care reform.

That motivated State Rep. Sal Santoro, R-Florence, to sign the brief. "It sends a message that the legislature of Kentucky, the ones that signed it, are not for that," Santoro said. "We want the people to know that we are fighting and resisting it."

Justices announced last year that they will hear arguments from lawyers in late March on the constitutionality of four provisions of the reform. The 2010 health care reform law aims to extend insurance coverage to more than 30 million Americans through measures that include expanding Medicaid and requiring individuals to buy health insurance.

Sen. Kathy Stein, D-Lexington, said the Republican lawmakers opposition to the reform could strike a blow at a health care law that benefits many in Kentucky, including families who can now keep their children on their workplace insurance plans until they reach 26 years old.

"It kind of makes me crazy when Kentucky legislators in particular rail against the federal government and what it does," Stein said. "Don't they recognize that we're not a donor state to the federal government? We receive. We get lots of money back, more than the taxes we send in. And until folks realize that, I don't believe we can have an intelligent debate about it."

Local Republican lawmakers said they favor health savings accounts, where consumers put pre-tax money into the accounts that pay for medical expenses and carry over from year to year, and tort reform as ways to make health care more affordable.

Fischer said the government could extend health care tax deductions, which are available to businesses, to individuals buying health insurance. State Rep. Addia Wuchner, R- Burlington, said they're many alternatives to the health care reform act.

"I think we have a lot of aspects to look at: interstate compacts, tort reform, insurance reform," Wuchner said.

