



Romney's Health Care Prescription Gives Some Conservatives Heartburn

by JULIE ROVNER

GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney insists that when it comes to health care, his first priority is the [full repeal](#) of the 2010 Affordable Care Act.

But some of his actions of the past few days have conservatives scratching their heads.

First, there was [the appointment](#) of Mike Leavitt, a former Utah governor and Health and Human Services secretary, to lead a potential Romney transition team.

Since leaving office at the end of George W. Bush's term, Leavitt has been [running a group](#) that has, among other things, been working to help states implement key portions of the law Romney has vowed to eliminate.

Needless to say, that didn't go over well among those who worry that Romney might not really be serious about obliterating the federal health law, which bears a striking resemblance to the [one he signed](#) as governor of Massachusetts. (More on that in a moment.)

"The fact that Romney picked Leavitt suggests he really doesn't mind Obamacare that much, and that he is just saying whatever he needs to say to get what he wants," blogged Michael Cannon of the libertarian Cato Institute. Cannon, by the way, has produced [this video](#), which directly challenges Leavitt's business model by arguing why states should *not* establish health exchanges.

Which brings us back to Romney and his Massachusetts plan. The [Wall Street Journal](#) has unearthed some old emails the Romney folks didn't manage to destroy suggesting that the former governor and some of his closest aides were even more in favor of the "individual mandate" than was formerly known.

But it's not just old emails where Romney's penchant to defend the mandate sneaks out. Here's how he described the Massachusetts law during a January GOP debate in Jacksonville:

"If you don't want to buy insurance, then you have to help pay for the cost of the state picking up your bill, because under federal law if someone doesn't have insurance, then we have to care for them in the hospitals, give them free care. So we said, no more, no more free riders. We are insisting on personal responsibility."

Of course he ended his thought by vowing, once again, to repeal the federal law, because he said, unlike the Massachusetts version, it "takes over health care for the American people."