



GOP Measure Would Mandate Health Coverage for Immigrants

By: Lisa Barron – May 29, 2013

Republican lawmakers negotiating immigration reform may require immigrants awaiting citizenship to buy their own health insurance.

The lawmakers insist their measure is not an Obamacare-like mandate, saying it is aimed at making immigrants prove they won't be a drain on the system before becoming citizens, reports Politico.

"We're dealing with a very specific circumstance and a very specific group of folks," Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida told the publication.

"It's individual responsibility for these folks to earn their ability to stay in the United States, to work in the United States, and to be legalized in the United States, and a big part of that has to be that they're not a public charge," he said.

But some conservatives say the proposal contradicts GOP opposition to mandatory healthcare coverage.

"That is virtually the opposite of the main point they made against Obamacare," Alex Nowrasteh of the Cato Institute, one of the leading advocates of immigration reform on the right, told Politico.

"It's totally reasonable to make sure you don't expand the welfare state, but there's no need to do that by imposing a discredited, Obama-style individual mandate," he said.

Undocumented immigrants are not entitled to purchase coverage through the new Obamacare health insurance exchanges and are ineligible for subsidies at any level of government under the healthcare-reform law.

The bipartisan Senate bill also would outlaw healthcare subsidies for immigrants, but it would allow them to buy their own health insurance through the exchanges.