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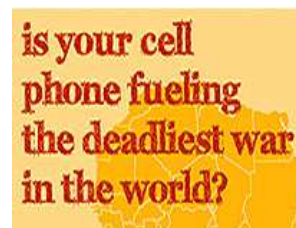

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Was Obama 'Conned' by Big Pharma or Is He Just Running a 'Protection Racket'?

By Harkavy in [Drugs](#), [Featured](#), [Obama Drama](#)

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Slate's Tim Noah has all the [grizzly details](#) of how the White House has caved in to the Billy Tauzin and the pharmaceutical industry in the complex, intense bartering over health-care "reform."

By agreeing to lower prescription costs for seniors by \$80 billion, Big Pharma won a key concession from Barack Obama's crew: The drug industry would not have to endure additional pressure from Congress for more savings. Some estimate that Big Pharma got off extraordinarily easy.

Lefties are howling about it, and so are many conservatives. That might mean that Obama's doing the right thing, but it might also mean that he's running a [protection racket](#). It sure as shit looks like one.

The health-care system may not work, but the [lobbying system](#) does. Former congressman Tauzin is the chief Big Pharma guy, and apparently a pretty good one. So far, the drug companies look like the health sector's winners in the reform negotiations.

More on this from American Public Media's [Marketplace](#).

Predictably (to say the least), the Nation tabs this "[A Rancid Deal With Big Pharma](#)." But it takes the people at the Cato Institute to get to the point of just how great a deal this is for the drug industry and just how bad it is for the public. Of course, the way Cato's Michael F. Cannon portrays it, [Obama's operating a protection racket](#). Cannon has an excellent point. Speaking of all the deals that Obama's crew is cutting with various industries and companies in these health-care negotiations, he writes:

Each agreement was negotiated behind closed doors, away from public scrutiny. All are contingent on the favored groups getting something they want, and all "savings" could be undone by future lobbying. To paraphrase George Bailey, the industry isn't selling - the industry is buying.

President Obama's idea of health care reform is to give the federal government sweeping new powers to dictate what Americans will purchase and how much they will pay. If you want to know who will benefit from that approach, who will pay and who will be pulling the strings, the president is doing his best to show you.

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