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'Zero tolerance' for Obamacare critics

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On Sept. 9, autocratic Kathleen Sebelius, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services secretary, wrote a threatening letter to the national office of America's Health Insurance Plans. Charging these insurance companies with "scare tactics" and "misinformation" about the president's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Sebelius is incensed at their "falsely blam(ing) premium increases for 2011" on this Obamacare.

She warns these miscreants that "there will be zero tolerance for this type of misinformation and unjustified rate increases." Missing from her edict is where she finds in the Constitution the authority of the executive branch to punish free-speaking critics of the implementation of a law.

And punish she will. There will be an enemies list: "We will also keep track of insurers with a record of unjustified rate increases: those plans may be excluded from health insurance Exchanges in 2014."

Bottom line: Shut up or we'll make you pay.

It was that thrust of majestic arrogance that ignited Samuel Adams' original Tea Party in response to the arrogance of King George III. Michelle Malkin (New York Post, Sept. 15), reminds us of a previous Obama White House enemies' list that added to the surge of the current tea parties.

Last August, the White House website ask all of us, "If you get an email or see something on the web about health insurance reform that seems fishy, send it to flag@whitehouse.gov."

By then I had already written Obamacare columns that our physician-in-chief might have considered "fishy," but that White House invitation to informants has since been discontinued, so I'll never know if I made the list of suspects.

Meanwhile more than a dozen states have filed, or joined, lawsuits against Obamacare (lifenews.com). Unafraid of being admonished by Sebelius, they maintain that the Obama administration violated the Constitution's

commerce clause and the 10th Amendment. ("The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or the people.")

Now, Mr. President and Secretary Sebelius, you may be a little confused. See, "the people" are the vast majority who inhabit this great nation. You have come across a reference to them in the Constitution: "We the People of the United States ... do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." You work for us.

The 12 states and millions of "We the People" cannot find anywhere in the Constitution why, under Obamacare, each and every citizen, and including legal residents, must purchase health care coverage — or, if we disobey Sebelius, we must be penalized by paying a fine for our rebelliousness. For this we went to war against King George III?

With regard to Sebelius' rage about the spreading of "misinformation" about Obamacare — and also her indignation that insurance companies "falsely blame ... unjustified rate increases" on that shining achievement of the Obama administration, health care scholar Michael Tanner, a Cato Institute senior fellow (as am I), speaks up. He instructs the president and the myriad bureaucrats administrating what they decide you'll get under Obamacare — unless enough members of Congress acquainted with the Constitution repeal this law:

"Obamacare utterly fails to control rising health care costs (as so resoundingly pledged by the president). In fact, a new report from the government's own actuaries concludes that total U.S. health care spending will rise FASTER as a result of the new law than if we had done nothing."

Remember the president's teleprompted guarantees that his Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will cut the spiraling national deficit? "The result (of Obamacare)," Tanner continues, "is that insurance premiums will jump as much as 9 percent next year, especially in the individual and small-group markets. Some customers could see hikes (in their premiums) of 20 percent or more." (New York Post, September 13)

Secretary Sebelius, should you not apologize to the insurance companies you publicly excoriated for "falsely blaming premium increases for 2011" on Obamacare?"

And I wonder how many seniors among the voters this year and in 2012 know, as Peter Ferrara and Larry Hunter reported in the Sept. 9 Wall Street Journal that Richard Foster, Medicare's chief actuary notes: "Medicare payment rates for the doctors and hospitals serving seniors will be cut by 30 percent during the next three years."


In the midterm elections, I'm voting for my own life — to escape Obamacare.




It is President Obama who's using "scare tactics": by threatening objectors to his command that we buy health insurance or else be forced to pay a fine.

Mr. President, I am an American, sir, and will vote for the Constitution.

Nat Hentoff is a nationally renowned authority on the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights. He is a member of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and the Cato Institute, where he is a senior fellow.

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