



Romney taps ObamaCare apologist to head transition

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During the Republican presidential primary season, Mitt Romney was unable to convince conservatives and Tea Party-minded voters to coalesce behind his campaign for various reasons. Perhaps most of all was the health care reform law Romney pushed during his one term as Governor of Massachusetts, which would later serve as the blueprint for ObamaCare.

But now that Romney had mathematically secured enough delegates to become the Republican nominee, all is forgiven, right? Perhaps in some ways, but many conservatives are employing the adage made famous by Ronald Reagan — “trust, but verify.” Romney, however, isn’t make it easy for them. Recently, he [chose former Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt to head his transition team](#) should he defeat President Barack Obama this fall, a pick that has some conservatives reeling, as Philip Klein [explains](#):

Over the weekend, [Politico](#) broke the news that Mitt Romney had tapped Mike Leavitt, the former Utah Governor and HHS Secretary under George W. Bush, to lead the transition effort should Romney win the presidency. This is a very worrisome signal to conservatives holding out hope that Romney will live up to his promises to fight for limited government if elected. As Ben Domenech [details](#), Leavitt is one of the few Republicans who has been actively campaigning for governors to implement Obamacare’s health care exchanges at the state level. Conveniently enough, his consultancy group would profit from such an expansion of government because he has won contracts to set up the exchanges.

Though a lot of the reaction to the Leavitt appointment has focused on support for the key component of Obamacare, it’s worth noting that as governor of a very conservative state, Leavitt expanded government and fought efforts to cut taxes. As governor of Utah, Leavitt received a “D” in the Cato Institute’s 2002 fiscal policy report card – the same grade as Howard Dean that year, making him “one of the most pro-big government governors.”

[...]

Leavitt, in short, was exactly the type of Republican the Tea Party was founded to oppose, and he’s playing a key role in planning a potential Romney presidency, and as the Politico reports, “already, plugged-in Republicans from Washington to Salt Lake City are buzzing that Leavitt could make his own transition next January into the job of White House chief of staff or as a-Valerie Jarrett like personal counselor to a President Romney.”

This is troubling on several levels. To start, as we all know, Romney's Massachusetts health care law served as the model for Obamacare. Both plans expand Medicaid, force individuals to purchase government-approved insurance coverage and provide subsidies for people to purchase government-designed insurance on government-run exchanges. Romney was a big proponent of exchanges and supported them as governor, and now has named a leading Republican advocate of them to a key post. The Romney campaign still [insists](#) to Matt Lewis that they still plan on repealing Obamacare. But even if we trust that's the case (something that deserves greater skepticism given the Leavitt news) the question is what replaces Obamacare. Romney has been incredibly vague about how he would reform the health care system in the absence of Obamacare. The danger is that he could end up replacing it with a system that still has exchanges, but exchanges that are billed as having fewer regulations, lower subsidies and giving more flexibility to states. The problem is that this would still put the basic exchange infrastructure in place that a future Democratic administration could build on so the country would eventually wind up with Obamacare anyway – or something worse.

This may be dismissed by many Republicans since Leavitt is only heading up Romney's transition team; however, it does provide an indicator of what sort of administration Romney plans to run. Leavitt is a lobbyist who is [paid to push a key part of ObamaCare](#).

This is cronyism, and there's no getting around that.