



Washington Post's Glenn Kessler Factchecks Obamacare Claims

John on October 10, 2011 at 11:37 am

Sort of a worthwhile project but it doesn't take long before it goes awry. I tried to embed the clip but it's not working at the moment so here's a link.

The first part about the page count of Obamacare is special pleading. Here's Kessler's longer account of that from June:

Michael Cannon, director of health policy at the Cato Institute, gave us a copy of a consolidated version of the two bills. In other words, this is what the law would have looked like if it had been written in the usual way. This version clocks in at just 907 pages.

Cannon is a critic of both laws and thinks that page length of a bill can be a telling indicator, showing a "potential for mischief." But he estimated that the section of the national law that directly compares to Romney's law is only about 200 pages of the 907-page version.

Okay, 200 pages is still more than 70, right? Not necessarily. When Romney signed the bill, the Boston Globe reported that it was 145 pages long. There's not much difference between 200 and 145 pages. Perhaps Romney is now using double-sided paper?

After we told Romney spokesman Eric Fehrnstrom about the Globe report, he said he went to the Web site of the Massachusetts Legislature and printed out the bill (technically, Chapter 58 of the Acts of 2006). He said he counted 66 pages.

So by cherry picking a section of Obamacare and comparing it to an inaccurate report in the far left Boston Globe, Kessler finds no discernible difference. And if there is one, well, it's silly to count pages anyway.

Here's a fact. The Affordable Care Act included all those other programs for a reason. The CLASS Act was included because it showed a projected surplus that the Democrats needed to add to the budget buster bill to keep the cost down (on paper). Saying that doesn't count now is the worst kind of special pleading. Then it gets worse:

800,000 jobs sounds like it's a lot but it's not in the overall US economy. And those jobs really aren't killed. Think about a woman who is now 63 and is working just so she can get healthcare before she qualifies for Medicare. Now, under the new health care law, she could leave her job and be guaranteed that she has healthcare.

We've lost nearly 3 million jobs in the last 3 years. That's a huge difference to the national well being. So 800,000 as roughly 1/4 of that is a lot, even in our economy. In any case, this is supposed to be a FACT check. Saying that 800,000 jobs isn't a lot doesn't strike me as a fact. It's an opinion. So why is it included here?

As for the jobs "killed" by Obamacare, Kessler dealt with that at length here. His argument is that the jobs aren't being killed so much as abandoned. Here's part of what the CBO actually said about this:

The expansion of Medicaid and the availability of subsidies through the exchanges will effectively increase beneficiaries' financial resources. Those additional resources will encourage some people to work fewer hours or to withdraw from the labor market. In addition, the phaseout of the subsidies as income rises will effectively increase marginal tax rates, which will also discourage work. But because most workers who are offered insurance through their jobs will be ineligible for the exchanges' subsidies and because most people will have income that is too high to be eligible for Medicaid, those effects on financial resources and marginal tax rates will apply only to a small segment of the population.

I guess it's fair to say that abandoned jobs aren't being "killed" exactly. But it's also fair to say that Obamacare will kill incentive for 800,000 jobs and that's really not all that different. If Kessler had said that this was moderately false, I might go with it. But suggesting this is some bald face lie isn't fair. Obamacare does kill the jobs, just indirectly.

It goes on like this. \$500 billion in cuts came from providers, not beneficiaries? Um...okay. So what do the beneficiaries have once that money is taken from the providers? He doesn't say.

What's really stunning is the factchecks that Kessler leaves out. Here's an easy one. How about Obama's promise that "if you like your plan you can keep it." Turns out Obama can't deliver on that promise and his own health reform czar has recently started backtracking on it. Is Kessler planning a follow up video with all of the President's false statements?