

Posted at 06:00 AM ET, 06/19/2012 TheWashingtonPost

## Mitt Romney adviser Mike Leavitt meets with conservative GOP lawmakers about health care

By [Ed O'Keefe](#)

A campaign adviser to [Mitt Romney](#) who supports elements of the 2010 health-care reform law huddled Monday with conservative Republican lawmakers to discuss health care just days before the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule on the constitutionality of the reforms.

[Michael O. Leavitt](#) met late Monday afternoon at the [Republican National Committee](#) headquarters with about 20 members of the [Republican Study Committee](#), a group of conservative lawmakers firmly opposed to the health-care law that ardently supports repealing it regardless of what the high court decides.

Leavitt is an unpaid adviser to the Romney campaign who was tapped this month [to lead a presidential transition](#) if the Republican presidential candidate wins in November. Leavitt served as secretary of Health and Human Services during the George W. Bush administration and was Utah's governor when Romney was chosen to revamp the organizing of the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics. The pair grew close during Romney's stewardship of the games.

Despite Romney's stated opposition to the health-care reform law, Leavitt has said he supports the law's mandate that state governments establish insurance exchanges by 2014. The exchanges — or marketplaces where individuals and small businesses can compare and buy insurance — are a major point of contention for the law's Republican opponents. Since leaving government, Leavitt established a health consulting firm, [Leavitt Partners](#), that has more than doubled in size since President Obama signed the law as it advises some state governments on how to implement the law, [according to news reports](#).

On Monday as Leavitt left the meeting, he told 2chambers that the RSC "invited me to come and speak in my personal capacity about health care, and so we spoke of all the things you'd expect you would on an occasion

like this, where we're waiting for a Supreme Court decision and where there's a lot of political debate about the Affordable Care Act."

But Leavitt declined to say what specific advice he shared with the group: "I'm not speaking these days very much about policy in a public way. We had a conversation about their views."

He laughed when asked if he collected any resumes during the meeting for his transition work: "I wasn't there for that purpose," he said, before reiterating that "I was there entirely to talk about my own health care experiences."

The meeting — which was not arranged by the Romney campaign — came as the GOP presidential candidate has drawn closer in recent days to Republican lawmakers. Romney campaigned in Ohio Sunday with [House Speaker John A. Boehner \(R-Ohio\)](#) and met last week with [Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell \(R-Ky.\)](#).

Several RSC members were seen leaving the meeting, including Reps. [Patrick McHenry \(R-N.C.\)](#), [Jeff Flake \(R-Ariz.\)](#), [Jason Chaffetz \(R-Utah\)](#), [Dennis Ross \(R-Fla.\)](#), [Tom Price \(R-Ga.\)](#), [Tim Scott \(R-S.C.\)](#) and RSC Chairman [Jim Jordan \(R-Ohio\)](#).

"It was all about health care," McHenry said. "He just laid out his vision" and the group didn't discuss presidential politics, he said.

Price said the discussion focused on Leavitt's leadership of HHS: "I guess the biggest take-home message was that the economics of our current spending and debt are going to drive reform regardless of what government does."

"Regardless of what the court does, the status quo is unacceptable," Price added. "Whatever remains ought to be repealed and then there are wonderful solutions to all of these challenges that don't require putting Washington in charge, and we need to work through that."

Though Monday's pow-wow with Leavitt was billed as a wonky discussion of health care, it also follows criticism from some conservative groups and commentators — including [the Cato Institute](#) and [popular RedState.com blogger Erick Erickson](#) — that Leavitt is insufficiently conservative to lead a potential Romney transition.

But Price said "I never heard those concerns from anybody" during the meeting.