



Ohio's press eager to help Gov. Kasich enshrine Obamacare

By [Jason Hart](#)
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Gov. John Kasich's expansion of Medicaid under Obamacare has Ohio newspaper editors excited for his all-but-certain re-election next Tuesday.

With Democrat challenger Ed FitzGerald [down 22.7 points in the RealClearPolitics average](#)^[1], newspaper endorsements in the race serve little purpose except as previews of how the press will frame Kasich's efforts to renew Medicaid expansion.

The editors of Northeast Ohio Media Group and the Cleveland Plain Dealer [wrote Oct. 24](#)^[2] that Kasich "showed foresight and political acumen by pushing through a needed Medicaid expansion that allowed Ohio access to federal funds and made this benefit of the Affordable Care Act available to low-income residents across the state."

"That was a gutsy piece of leadership that had Kasich going against his own party in making an end run around the state legislature to have the State Controlling Board push it through," the Plain Dealer editors added.

Led [by The Columbus Dispatch](#)^[3] — whose publisher [is a five-figure Kasich donor](#)^[4] — Ohio's newspapers [have ignored problems](#)^[5] with Medicaid expansion, [encouraged Kasich to expand Medicaid unilaterally](#)^[6], and seem eager to help Kasich grow government further.

"John Kasich's first term as governor has been one of the most consequential, successful and remarkable in Ohio's history," the [Sept. 21 Dispatch endorsement](#)^[7] began. Ohio has gained roughly 250,000 jobs since Kasich took office in 2011; Kasich's Obamacare expansion [has put 400,000 Ohioans on Medicaid](#)^[8] this year.

The Toledo Blade editorial board, [declining to endorse either Kasich or FitzGerald](#)^[9], nonetheless lauded Kasich for "defying the obstructionism of his fellow Republicans in the General Assembly" by expanding Medicaid himself after the Legislature voted against it.

With media support, Kasich dismisses criticism from the right as proof he's pragmatic. Newspaper reporters have taken to calling limited-government Republicans "[archconservatives](#)^[10]," leaving it to the governor and his campaign operatives at the Ohio Republican Party to define what "conservative" means.

Kasich, elected as a “Tea Party” candidate who would fight Obamacare and out-of-control spending, [talked up the Legislature’s need to](#) ^[11] “work together” and “make sure that we don’t become extreme in any way — from my party or theirs” at an Oct. 28 Columbus Metropolitan Club event.

“If you’re not on the bus, we’ll run over you with the bus” — [which is what Kasich told lobbyists in December 2010](#) ^[12] — sounds much harsher than his recent appeals to moderation and unity. But lawmakers say Kasich’s leadership style hasn’t changed.

“The governor worked with the conservative House the first two years,” Rep. John Adams, a Sidney Republican and assistant majority floor leader in the Ohio House, told Ohio Watchdog. “The second half, I’d have to say we got run over by that bus of his.”

“Medicaid expansion, tax shifting to get the income tax cuts rather than spending cuts, the list goes on,” Adams continued. “This explains his D grade from Cato among all of the governors and why Ohio’s ranked 44th by the Tax Foundation.”

Kasich was tied for the lowest score of all Republican governors [in a recent Cato Institute fiscal policy report card](#) ^[13], and the state [fell two spots to 44th](#) ^[14] in Tax Foundation’s 2015 State Business Tax Climate Index.

Adams concluded, “Kasich is using the same accounting scheme he used when he balanced the federal budget as a congressman. What looks good, isn’t. What is a fiscal conservative to do?”

When Kasich expanded Medicaid unilaterally last autumn, Adams gathered the signatures of more than three dozen House members, including Speaker Bill Batchelder, [on a formal protest letter against the governor’s maneuvering](#) ^[15].

How did Kasich “work together” with legislators to address their concerns? By proceeding as if state representatives’ opposition to Obamacare was [an affront to God](#) ^[16], was “[political or ideological](#)” ^[17], or [simply did not exist](#) ^[18].

The next Ohio House speaker will be in a position to fight Kasich’s “compassionate” policies as term-limited Batchelder has done only rarely. Adams, who is also term-limited, has endorsed Rep. Jim Butler against speaker race frontrunner Rep. Cliff Rosenberger, [who is seen as Kasich’s favored candidate](#) ^[19].

Kasich’s campaign did not respond to an Ohio Watchdog inquiry about the governor’s support for Obamacare, and the governor’s office has not replied to questions about Cato Institute and Tax Foundation criticism of Kasich’s record.