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Individual Mandates: Bad for Freedom, Bad for the Wallet

by Sabrina Schaeffer
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These days support for Obamacare is skeptical, at best, and support for individual mandates is even weaker. According to a recent poll commissioned by the IWF, 61 percent of respondents *oppose* an individual mandate. Not surprising, considering both the House and Senate bills have attached stiff penalties bolstered by jail time for non-compliance.

Putting the, you know, very small issue of freedom and individual rights aside, there's still the serious issue of what Obamacare will *cost* Americans. And let's be honest, that's what President Obama and the Democrats care about anyway, right? (If they weren't so concerned with health care *spending*, why else would a government panel suddenly decide to throw out longstanding medical guidelines on mammograms and - to quote today's WSJ- "re-analyze the data with health-care spending as a core concern"?)

Michael Cannon over at the Cato Institute lays out the numbers and calculates how Sen. Reid's \$1.5 trillion estimate is a bunch of baloney. For those of us who are particularly concerned with individual mandates, Michael makes some important points about what they are likely to cost:

"But the biggest hidden cost is that of the private-sector mandates. In both the Clinton health plan and the Massachusetts health plan, the private-sector mandates -- the legal requirements that individuals and employers purchase health insurance -- accounted for 60 percent of total costs. That suggests that if the Reid bill's cost to federal and state governments is \$1 trillion, then the total cost is probably \$2.5 trillion, and Harry Reid - like House Speaker Nancy Pelosi - is hiding \$1.5 trillion of the cost of his bill.

Without a cost estimate of the private-sector mandates, Reid has not yet satisfied the request made by eight Democratic senators for a "complete CBO score" of the bill 72 hours prior to floor consideration.

Fortunately, by law, the CBO must eventually score the private-sector mandates. When that happens, the CBO will reveal costs that the bills' authors are trying to hide. When that happens, the CBO will present the new federal spending on page 1, new state spending maybe on page 10, and the cost of the private-sector mandates on page 20 or something. Democrats will tout the

figure on page 1. But the bill's total cost will be the sum of those three figures -- a sum that will reveal the costs that the bill's authors have been hiding."