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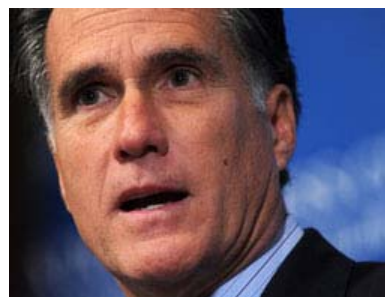
Is Mitt Going Down?

Health reform's first political casualty may be a Republican.

By Timothy Noah

Posted Wednesday, March 10, 2010, at 5:03 PM ET

Click [here](#) for a guide to following the health care reform story online.



Mitt Romney

Republicans are threatening that any Democrat who votes for the health care reform bill will pay the consequences in November. "Every election this fall will be a referendum on this bill," Senate Minority Leader [Mitt McConnell](#), R-Ky., said March 7 on ABC News' *This Week*. "Democrats think by passing the bill they'll be able to get it behind them and change the subject to something else like jobs," Sen. [John Cornyn](#), R-Texas, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, [told reporters](#) March 8. "But this will do the opposite. This will make sure that health care is the No. 1 issue that the

election is won or lost on in November."

Well, maybe. But there's a decent likelihood that the first to perish under this Republican *fatwa* won't be a Democrat running in 2010 but a Republican running in 2012. His name is Mitt Romney.

I won't attempt to conceal my *schadenfreude* when I say that Romney's tortured argument that [the health reform now contemplated in Washington](#) bears *no resemblance* to [the health reform he achieved as governor in Massachusetts](#) is beginning to look just as phony to conservatives as it does to [liberals like me](#). Case in point: When Romney [started fulminating](#) March 8 on *Fox News Sunday* against "the idea that government can step in and take over the health care system, and tell insurers and providers and doctors and hospitals how to do a better job" ([text](#), [video](#)) the host, Chris Wallace, called a timeout. "Governor," Wallace said, "I want to pick up on this, because we got a lot of e-mail from conservatives this week who said that you are the wrong man to be making that point, and they pointed specifically to your role in passing health care reform in Massachusetts."

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Ouch.

TODAY'S TODAY'S TODAY'S TODAY'S

"There's a big difference between what we did and what President Obama is doing," Romney replied. "What we did, I think, is the ultimate conservative plan. We said people have to take responsibility for getting insurance, if they can afford it, or paying their own way. No more free riders."

Bad answer! The "individual mandate" requiring everyone to have health insurance is something Obama's and Romney's plans have in common—and one, by the way, that Republicans have lately taken to calling **unconstitutional**. (They're **wrong**, but that's what they're saying, even though some of them **used to say** something else.) "But Governor," Wallace answered,

Let's look at the plan that you signed into law in Massachusetts in 2006. You have an individual mandate. You have an employer mandate. You have subsidies for some of the uninsured. You set minimum insurance coverage standards. Again, a lot of e-mails I got from conservatives say—make this point. They say it sure sounds an awful lot like Obamacare.

Mayday! Mayday!

"A big difference—a *state* plan versus a *federal* plan," Romney parried. He continued:

No new taxes, unlike his plan. No cut in Medicare, unlike his plan. And no controls over insurance premiums, price controls, cost controls like his plan. So very, very different in that regard. It's the difference between a racehorse and a donkey, if you will, so—they both have four legs, but one works pretty well and the other's not working and would not work at all.

It was a nice try, but Wallace didn't buy it.

I want to pursue this, if I may, Governor. The libertarian, and certainly the somewhat conservative, Cato Institute says that your plan in Massachusetts is a mirror—a mirror plan of Obamacare. They say it's quite right you didn't raise taxes, but they say, in fact, you got millions of dollars from the federal government to finance your plan.

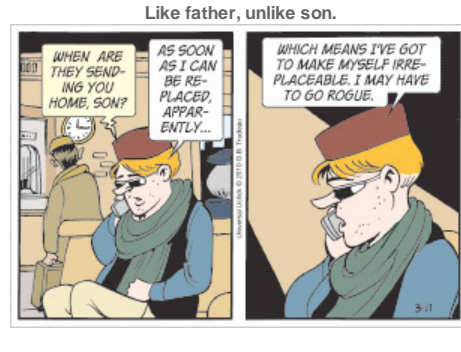
Actually, Romneycare *did* raise taxes in Massachusetts—as noted by Cato's Michael F. Cannon [here](#) and by Cato's Michael Tanner [here](#). Cannon cited a Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation [estimate](#) that the Massachusetts health reform costs state taxpayers \$88 million per year (and then argued this lowballed the true cost to state taxpayers by a factor of 19). But Wallace was right about the "millions of dollars from the federal government." State funding is matched by a [roughly equivalent amount](#) from Washington, as Romney conceded.

"No government insurance," Romney finally bleated. "No government option, if you will." "Well, there's no government option in the Obama plan anymore, either," Wallace pointed out. "No, that's right," answered Romney. "That's right. *And so what we did was entirely different than what President Obama is proposing on the bases that I'm taking you through.*"

This didn't go down well at the Club For Growth, the conservative group whose specialty is killing off Republican incumbents suspected of moderate tendencies. As recently as 2007, the Club For Growth's president, Pat Toomey, [pronounced himself](#) "reasonably optimistic that, as president, Mitt Romney would generally advocate a pro-growth agenda." But [according to Greg Sargent of the Plum Line](#), Andy Roth, the group's vice president for government affairs, now feels less sanguine. "The individual mandate is diametrically against what free-market conservatives believe in," he said. If Romney thinks it's a conservative policy, "then I think he is in the wrong party."

Ouch.

This skirmish comes four months after Glenn Beck of Fox News said, in a Webcast, that Romney "gave you government health care that is now bankrupting the state of Massachusetts." (The "bankrupting" part [isn't true](#), but never mind.) Rush Limbaugh's a little ticked off at Romney, too (though not over health reform, for some reason; Limbaugh's [peeved](#) that Romney endorsed Sen. John McCain, whom Limbaugh has never much liked, in the Arizona Republican primary). And writing in the conservative *Boston Herald* ("[Mitt Romney Dogged By Health Care](#)"), Hillary Chabot pointed out March 9 that Romneycare (unlike Obamacare) allowed low-income Bay Staters to receive *government-*



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funded abortions. Wait till House Minority Leader John Boehner [hears about that!](#) Romney had little choice, he said through a spokesman, because he was abiding by a court decision. That argument [didn't help Mike Dukakis](#) in 1988. A Democrat might buy it, but Republicans [can be vicious](#) about such things.

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
 Timothy Noah is a senior writer at [Slate](#).
Photograph of Mitt Romney by Tim Sloan/AFP/Getty Images.

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 **David Wayne Osedach**
Who needs Mitt Romney?
Today, 10:24:11 - [Flag](#) - [Reply](#)

 **Kevin Lim**
The irony is that if we could divorce Romney from the need to pander to his base, and thus allowed the real Romney to run on what he really believes in, I think you would see a practical and moderate/centrist platform that many voters could buy into.

Alas, Romney has decided (perhaps correctly) that honesty is political suicide. With Palin in the mix for 2012 and getting some serious traction from the lunatic fringe, he and every other GOP candidate is feeling an even greater pull to the Dark Side ... oops I mean to the Far Right.

For that reason alone, I do not understand the vitriol the Left pours on Palin. She is the gift that keeps on giving. Either she ends on the ticket in 2012 and then implodes, or she drags every other GOP candidate into crazy base land and makes them all unelectable. Liberals should seriously consider

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contributing to her campaign.

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Liked by racerx_is_alive Brent Butterworth



John Pace

I wonder if the 'vitriol the Left pours on Palin' is not one reason for her popularity among the right....

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Brent Butterworth

Agreed. Same goes for McCain. He was pretty good before he started pandering to the base. Unfortunately, what's probably a small minority of hardcore wackos has made the Republican Party useless at best and a malignant tumor on America at worst.

Today, 10:56:15 – [Flag](#) – [Reply](#)



Daniel Alt

The problem is... what if she wins? Are you REALLY willing to say it can't happen? We've elected obvious intellectual lightweights in the past.

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Donny Kerabatsos

This is typical Romney. The man is a pathological liar. This is why he couldn't win the GOP nomination in 2008 even though he had Rush and every other talking head in the right-wing echo machine singing his praises and begging GOP voters to vote for him and not McCain. He lies so flagrantly and shamelessly, and the public sees right through him. If the best the GOP can offer in 2012 is either Romney or Palin, look for Obama to win every state except Utah.

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Liked by John Pace



dan freema

The only people who would support govt socialized medacine are folk who believe in somethin for nothin all 48 million of them and then some. if you cant afford it now wait n see how much it'll be when its free

Yesterday, 23:46:51 – [Flag](#) – [Reply](#)



Brent Butterworth

Dan, you have employer-provided insurance, right?

The reality for those of us who actually fend for ourselves in the health care market (as opposed to those who merely fantasize about being bold individualists) is that if we have any number of pre-existing conditions, we cannot buy insurance at any price. If we're lucky, we can get into a high-risk pool (after a wait of several months to a year) and pay only 2x market prices for our insurance.

The U.S. health care "system" works great for all the pampered poodles out there with employer-provided insurance, but for the rest of us, it works haphazardly or not at all.

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Matt Stanislawski

If only we had govt socialized spell-check.

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Bet

I don't care what Mitt Romney says, Obamacare is not for the good of the people. Obama thinks only of himself not the general public.

Yesterday, 21:52:24 – [Flag](#) – [Reply](#)



Guest

You know, if you disagree with the principles of the idea of universal health-care, that's one thing. But you people who keep demonizing Obama like that are truly childish. If you really can't wrap your head around the idea that some people do the things they do because they genuinely think it's the right thing to do, or they genuinely feel that it will help people, then it's a sad sad life you must have.

Maybe he's wrong about the strategy. That's a different argument, and one that can reasonably and thoughtfully be argued. But that's different than accusing him of basically being an evil person who is purposefully ruining an entire country's people and doesn't care. Not to mention that the argument makes no sense. How would it help HIM to pass a huge bill that is a failure? Why would anyone with 2 brain-cells left think that THAT would help them gain any popularity whatsoever? It's an idiotic assertion. Like I said, his strategy may be wrong, but accusing him of what you are is a whole different ballgame. Seriously. Grow up.

Yesterday, 22:54:00 – [Flag](#) – [Reply](#)

Liked by QCIC Cap Ja John Pace



Scott Bett

Romney like most Republicans is two-faced. They say something out of one side of their mouth to one group and then spin around and say something to another group completely opposite. In the article above

you see how many times he lied about the similiarities between the Obama plan . . . and the Mass plan.

Like Fidel Castro and Chavez and the Iranian President, Republicans like to stoke the fire of making people scared. Its these same scare tatatics that are why WE THE PEOPLE finally took the country back from the greedy corporations and greedy rich that got plenty of tax breaks from 2 past republican presidents. Bush and Reagan. Don't ever trust someone that is over 50 and all his hair is the same dark black look slicked back. THE man is fake!

Yesterday, 20:27:22 – [Flag](#) – [Reply](#)

Liked by  Scott Bett  Cap Ja  John Pace



Bet

I don't know what planet you live on but on this planet Obama is not good for America!



Yesterday, 21:53:22 – [Flag](#) – [Reply](#)



Taipo

I notice you keep repeating basically the same thing over and over Bet. Maybe you could attempt to defend your statements with actual reasons, instead of just hitting the repeat button. Saying it over and over doesn't make it true. Not to mention the fact that you can find thousands of people who can give you a list of reasons why almost EVERY president was bad for the country in some way.

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Liked by  Cap Ja  John Pace




Conan776

It's remarkable to hear that Governor Romney is running away from one of his major accomplishments. He's never struck me as a man of many principles but his dissembling there is pretty bad.

It's been completely bizarre to hear people like Glenn Beck and his parrots claiming that RomneyCare is bankrupting Massachusetts, because I live there and it's budgetary impact has been a non-issue.

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Liked by  QCIC  Auros Harman  John Pace



QCIC

Since when have people making political cases let the truth slow them down?

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Liked by  Auros Harman



Guest

As a MA resident, do you like RomneyCare? Is it popular amongst other residents? I ask because they've also tried to tell us that the residents hate it and don't like it, which I've never understood. While I've heard the R's say those things, I have yet to see them produce a single person on tv that comes out and says, "yes, I'm a MA resident and we all hate RomneyCare". Maybe you can shed some light.

I guess if Beck et al admit that it worked out well in any way, they'd have to admit that the fight against ObamaCare has been disingenuous.

Yesterday, 22:59:16 – [Flag](#) – [Reply](#)

Liked by  Cap Ja



Conan776

I have health insurance through my employer so it's been seamless from my perspective.

There were a few years running before the new law where the bosses basically said: "Sorry, no raises this year folks; all the money went to rising health insurance premiums" and that hasn't happened again. But I'm not an expert or an HR person so I don't know if there's a correlation.

But besides that, until they jacked up the newstand price last year, I basically read the conservative *Boston Herald* cover to cover 5 days a week on my commute since the time when Romney was still in office. If there was a huge push-back, a personal horror story, or a resulting budget crisis, I would have read about it. If Governor Patrick pays too much for new drapes, it's front page news to these guys.

It's just very odd, like the real Massachusetts has been replaced by a *Potemkin village* in reverse.

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Liked by  John Pace

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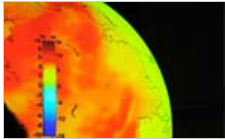
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