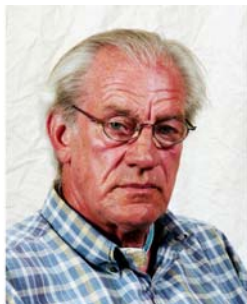




## Freedom's future

[Steve Williams](#)

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There are various estimates on how many words the Bible contains, but according to WikiAnswers, a common one is 783,137. Over the centuries, there have probably accumulated at least as many interpretations of what they mean as the words themselves.

So it's no surprise to learn that the arguments over, and interpretations of, the 500,000 words in the 2,500 pages of President Obama's health insurance plan have only just begun. Anticipation of those arguments and interpretations, remember, came from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who said in defense of voting for the legislation, "We have to pass the bill so you can find out what's in it."

Perhaps the most controversial piece of the bill is the individual mandate, a legal requirement that every American obtain health insurance coverage that meets the government's definition of "minimum essential coverage." Under ObamaCare, beginning in 2014 (two years after Mr. Obama seeks re-election for a final term as president, you'll note) those who fail to obtain insurance would be subject to a tax penalty. Ultimately, by 2016, an uninsured family of four would face a minimum penalty of \$2,085.

Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute (a conservative think tank) says that according to the Congressional Budget Office, roughly four million Americans will be hit by penalties in 2016, with the penalties averaging slightly more than \$1,000. "In fact," he says, "the federal government expects to raise \$17 billion from penalties by 2019."

The argument over the mandated purchase of insurance coverage, of course, is whether it's constitutional. In the history of the country, our government has never — never — required people to buy any good or service as a condition of lawful residence in the United States. Does the federal government has the power to compel individuals to purchase a particular consumer good — not as a prerequisite to some other privilege, such as driving, but merely because they live and breathe?

We're going to find out. Monday, Federal District Judge Henry Hudson decided to let a lawsuit filed by a private individual — Ken Cuccinelli of Virginia — against ObamaCare go forward. His ruling puts the issue on the road to final adjudication in the United States Supreme Court.

Imagine just how far from the Founders' vision the country will have strayed if the court rejects Mr. Cuccinelli's contention. That would leave all Americans at the mercy of congressional whim; the only thing standing between you and an individual mandate to buy a car, a handgun or a tube of toothpaste would be a Congress refusing to mandate such purchases. And we all know how easily Congress can be persuaded to dictate behavior; members of Congress, after all, are convinced they know best.

Is this important? You could say so. On what the court decides hangs the future of freedom on this planet.

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