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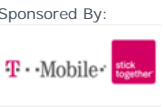
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Paul Mulshine
NJ Voices: Opinions from New Jersey



Strange bedfellows: Romneycare may sink Coakley - and revive Romney

By Paul Mulshine/The Star Ledger
January 17, 2010, 12:42PM

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As you can see from the YouTube clip above, Mitt Romney was the most prominent politician behind the rise of the worst "progressive" idea of the century - mandatory health insurance. Listen as he intones "no more free rides" when he really means "no more free market" in health insurance.

Romney is also responsible for introducing the **most idiotic analogy** of this debate: "We insist that everybody who drives a car has insurance. And cars are a lot less expensive than people."

Read [this paper](#) by Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute for an in-depth dissection of just where Romneycare went wrong.

Romney's **been backpedaling** ever since it became clear that the individual health insurance mandate is the lever the Democrats wish to use to force every American into a nationalized health-care system. I showed this dynamic at work in [this post](#) with quotes from the other Michael who is a health-care expert at Cato, Michael Cannon.

That dynamic was clear to anyone who was paying attention even back in 2006 when Romney was pushing the plan. Here's what I wrote back then:

Before he decided he wanted to run America, Romney was governor of Massachusetts. There, he helped push through a law requiring that every resident have health insurance. As usual, working people are promised big subsidies to help them afford coverage. And as is also usual with such plans, those subsidies are cut off at a relatively low income level. Under the Romney plan, the subsidy for a family of three disappears at \$48,000. But the requirement that they buy health insurance sticks around, backed up by a healthy fine.

Imagine some poor schlub trying to raise a family in high-cost Massachusetts on a take-home paycheck of \$800 a week

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And now try to think of how that guy can afford to shell out \$200 or so a week for health insurance. I can't. But Romney can.

Romneycare was a disaster, an entirely predictable one. And it's become a key issue in the special election to fill the U.S. Senate seat held by the late Ted Kennedy, who had been the biggest proponent of socialized medicine in the Senate.

Andrew Clark at Politics Daily **reports that** Massachusetts voters are rising up against the national Democratic plan, now in conference committee. That plan, which is supported by Democratic contender Martha Coakley, ended up looking a lot like Romneycare. And Massachusetts voters don't like that Massachusetts plan: "Only 26 percent said in a June 2009 Rasmussen poll that the state's health care reform effort has been effective. This is because the costs of insurance premiums are still skyrocketing with a predicted 10 percent increase in 2010."

Meanwhile the Republican in the race, Scott Brown, has built his campaign around a pledge that he will become the swing vote in the U.S. Senate to stop the Democrats from imposing Romneycare on the nation at large.

The truly ironic aspect is that by running against Romneycare, Brown may end up saving Romney's career. If the individual mandate dies a well-deserved death, then it will be a non-issue in the 2012 presidential campaign, when Romney is expected to run as the mainstream GOP candidate. And on issues other than health care, Romney is not a bad candidate. But if the focus is on health care, he's doomed.

So if the national individual mandate passes, Romney will have a lot of explaining to do. Unfortunately for him, **there are plenty of quotes** like the one above in which he endorsed this "progressive" - i.e. liberal - idea.

Politics does indeed make strange bedfellows. And if Romney's lucky, opposition to his 2006 plan will provide the margin to defeat Coakley, thereby saving his 2012 candidacy.

ALSO: Michael Cannon of Cato alerts me **his latest work** on the topic, "Obama's Other Massachusetts Problem." in which he points out the embarrassing (for Romney) resemblance of the current Democratic plan to the Massachusetts plan championed by Romney.

Cannon notes that "Young adults appear to be avoiding Massachusetts as a result of the law,' which was entirely predictable since a key reason for mandatory insurance is to overcharge the young to subsidize the old.

He also notes that "When Obama campaigns for Martha Coakley, he is really campaigning for his health plan, which means he is really campaigning for the Massachusetts health plan."

And that's not good for Romney. If I were him, I'd be pulling out all the stops to help Brown. If the Republican wins, this could become a dead issue - and Romney would remain a live candidate.

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