



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on July 20, 2009

David Gregory Puts Obama's HHS Secretary Through the Ringer

NBC's Meet the Press Host David Gregory must have been channeling the ghost of the late, great Tim Russert Sunday with his interview of Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius on Obama's healthcare plan.

The [interview](#) constituted a verbal bludgeoning, with repeated tough questions to which Sebelius could only sputter replies like, "Well, as you know, David, first of all, this is a work in progress" about Obama's healthcare initiatives currently under consideration in Congress.



Gregory's tough but fair questions [included](#) the following:

Douglas Elmendorf, director of the CBO, told the Senate Budget Committee. "On the contrary, the legislation significantly expands the federal responsibility for healthcare costs." So if lowering costs is the rationale, the president can't support what's going through Congress right now, can he?

...This is a huge blow, it seems like, on the face of it. If the priority is lowering costs, you've got the person who's in charge with a nonpartisan way of looking at these saying it's not going to contain costs. That was goal number one. It doesn't appear to be getting achieved through this.

... You want to spend a trillion dollars to bring costs down, and that the CBO is saying you won't bring costs down. And all you're saying in response to that is, "Well, no, they actually will"? I don't understand the disconnect here.

Well, what is the president committed to doing in terms of saying to both the House and the Senate leaders working on this, "You've got to control costs"? Because it seems to me this was a wake-up call, was it not?

Gregory also brought the issue of Massachusetts' failing healthcare system into the mix, by [asking](#):

We have some experience with universal health care now in Massachusetts and they're taking a hard look at that, because on the issue of costs it doesn't appear to be going so well. This is how the *Wall Street Journal* reported it on Friday: "In 2006, Massachusetts adopted a healthcare law that was [to] attain near-universal health insurance coverage.... But the plan has done little to control costs, which are now 33 percent higher than the U.S. average and projected to grow faster than the rest of the country." Is that another flashing red light here?

Sunday's *Meet the Press* says a number of things to thoughtful viewers. It said that Obama's healthcare program is not yet ready for prime time. But it also is a statement that maybe — *just maybe* — the show may be able to restore some of the glory it had under the former host Tim Russert. Russert was an ideological liberal, but he always asked tough questions. Gregory showed his first spark Sunday that he



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might eventually be a worthy heir of the king of Sunday morning television interview shows.



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