



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on January 13, 2010

Govt Funds Healthcare “Reform” Push

The push for President Obama’s agenda to promote healthcare “reform” is being secretly underwritten by taxpayer dollars. MIT economist Jonathan Gruber, described by the Washington Post’s Ezra Klein as “probably been the most aggressive academic economist supporting the reform effort,” has been on the U.S. Health and Human Services Department payroll to the tune of \$392,600 over the past year.



Politico.com [revealed](#) that Gruber has been secretly working on behalf of the Obama administration while posing as a disinterested citizen and academic seeking healthcare reform. Gruber denies that the lucrative contract influenced him to back Obama’s healthcare agenda, [telling Politico.com](#):

I do indeed have a contract with HHS. Throughout this year I have provided technical assistance to the administration and to Congress with my micro-simulation model, as well as based on my experience as a member of the Massachusetts health connector board. But NONE of the work I have done in public, or any public declarations I ahve [sic] made, has been in any way funded by the Administration. That funding was strictly for internal work that I did for the administration and, via the administration, for congress. All externally visible work and comments, such as my editorials or public reports, have been done on my own time.

Even leftists like the [DailyKos.com](#) are pointing out the lack of disclosure by Gruber as unprofessional. Gruber points to the fact that he listed his contract in an oblique disclosure form for a [Christmas Eve article](#) in the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*. But he neglected to mention that he made no such disclosure for a [July 2, 2009 article](#) in *NEJM* despite the fact that he had won a March 25, 2009 [contract](#) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to perform “Evaluating Options for National Healthcare Reform.”

Leftists are apologizing for Gruber’s lack of disclosure (in the [supposedly most open administration in history](#)). Despite this obvious lack of transparency, Paul Krugman of the *New York Times* [claims](#):

The truth is that this is no big deal. Gruber’s grant is from HHS, not the West Wing; it’s basically the same kind of thing as, say, an epidemiologist receiving a grant from the National Institutes of Health. You wouldn’t ordinarily say that this tarnishes the epidemiologist’s credentials as an independent analyst on infectious diseases, unless you want to say that nobody receiving a research grant can be considered independent.... The bottom line is this: Jon Gruber is a technical expert, some of whose research has been supported — entirely properly — by government agencies. And we need his input into policy.



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Of course, Gruber's disclosure form on the *NEJM* website [admitted](#), "I am a paid consultant to the Obama Administration." The form didn't state he was a paid consultant of the Department of Health and Human Services.

But Krugman does have the bottom line properly defined in part, even if he's wrong in saying that Gruber is not working for the West Wing. He does explain the prevailing wisdom of those inside the Washington, D.C., beltway who believe that government officials with expensive political agendas should make taxpayers pay for "research" studies that are then used to justify their intrusive programs. We "need his input into policy," socialists argue. This sort of self-perpetuating socialist activism is the only way that politically charged research can be cast as "technical expertise" without uproarious laughter.

The real bottom line is that political branches of government shouldn't be funding political advocacy disguised as technical data. There's no specific grant of authority under the U.S. Constitution to fund such studies at the federal level, technical or not, and financial underwriting of the incumbent political party's agenda strikes at the heart of free government.

Photo of Dr. Gruber: AP Images



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