



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 1, 2010

Minnesota Governor Says No to ObamaCare Subsidies

Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty is putting taxpayers' money where his mouth is. On August 31, he signed an executive order directing state agencies not to apply for any discretionary funds under ObamaCare.

In a statement, the Republican Pawlenty said, "Obamacare is an intrusion by the federal government into personal health care matters and it's an explosion of federal spending that does nothing to make health care more affordable. To the fullest extent possible, we need to keep Obamacare out of Minnesota. This executive order will stop Minnesota's participation in projects that are laying the groundwork for a federally-controlled healthcare system."



Pawlenty's order describes ObamaCare as "a dramatic attempt to assert federal command and control over this country's health care system" that "includes unprecedented federal intrusions into individual liberty," "massive new spending commitments," "increased taxes and fees," and "a multitude of programs and demonstration projects intended to speed the transition to federally-controlled health care."

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As his order indicates, Pawlenty had earlier refused to participate in ObamaCare's early expansion of Medicaid, and the August 31 order is therefore an extension of the state's nonparticipation in ObamaCare. It is also consistent with the position Pawlenty expressed at a veterans event in St. Paul, as [reported](#) by the Associated Press: "Anything that I can do to slow down, limit or negate Obamacare, I'm going to try to do it within reason."

Minnesota's Attorney General, Democrat Lori Swanson, favors ObamaCare and has not joined the other state attorneys general who are suing to overturn the law. On the other hand, seven of those same states are still lining up for their share of ObamaCare funds to cover retired state employees, according to the AP — precisely the opposite of Minnesota's situation.

Other Minnesota Democrats have criticized Pawlenty's order, saying it "could cost the state at least tens of millions of dollars in potential grant money," the AP reports. "By their calculation, Pawlenty already has rejected nearly \$1.5 billion, including \$1.4 billion to expand Medicaid health care for poor adults and \$68 million for a national high-risk pool for hard-to-insure people."

Likewise, says the AP, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius "told Minnesota Public Radio she hopes Minnesotans will 'have a little discussion' with Pawlenty to tell him about the law's benefits" and said that she fears "the citizens of Minnesota may be the victims."

But are Minnesotans really being victimized by Pawlenty's refusal to accept federal money? After all, the only way for Washington to get the money to send to St. Paul is to take it from Minnesotans — and



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all other Americans — in the first place. By declining to take the money, Pawlenty is (at least in theory) keeping everyone's taxes lower, so instead of sending their money to Washington in hopes of getting some fraction of it back, residents of his state get to keep their money from the outset. Furthermore, as Pawlenty explained, by accepting the money the state would also be accepting more federal control over its residents' healthcare, leaving Minnesotans at the mercy of Washington bureaucrats — a far more victimizing proposition than the loss of federal subsidies.

Pawlenty has been far from consistent in his opposition to federal subsidies. He has accepted subsidies that are not connected with ObamaCare and is considering whether to accept Medicaid assistance that is not part of the legislation. His spokesman, Bruce Gordon, said he is "likely" to take the money.

As a result of such inconsistency, Pawlenty's opposition to ObamaCare is frequently seen as a political move to assist the Governor in his expected presidential run in 2012. That may be the case. If so, it proves that opposing ObamaCare is considered by Pawlenty to be a winning issue even two years down the road — evidence that the law is deeply unpopular across the country and is not expected to become more popular anytime soon.

Political or not, Pawlenty's move to avoid a federal takeover of his state's healthcare system is a welcome addition to the growing state nullification movement.

Photo of Gov. Tim Pawlenty: AP Images





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