



## ObamaCare Costs May Compel U.S. Lawmakers and Aides to Resign

In November 2010, a significant number of members of Congress were ousted from their posts because of their votes for the passage of ObamaCare earlier that year. This year, quite a number of lawmakers may also be [leaving](#) their jobs as a result of the healthcare legislation — except this time, it's voluntary: in fear of the rising costs of their health insurance premiums.



The provision at issue is called the Grassley Amendment, which states that the government may offer members of Congress and their staff only health insurance plans that are “created” in the bill or “offered through an exchange.”

Currently, aides and lawmakers are covered under a very generous federal health insurance package whereby the government subsidizes approximately 75 percent of the premiums for the health insurance plans.

But Politico explains why dozens of lawmakers are considering retiring early or simply quitting:

Government-subsidized premiums will disappear at the end of the year under a provision in the health care law that nudges aides and lawmakers onto the government health care exchanges, which could make their benefits exorbitantly expensive.

Sources said several aides have already given lawmakers notice that they'll be leaving over concerns about Obamacare. Republican and Democratic lawmakers said the chatter about retiring now, to remain on the current health care plan, is constant.

Politico notes that Democrats and Republicans in Congress are awaiting specific details from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on the ObamaCare provision that will do away with government-subsidized premiums. A decision on that rule is expected by fall.

However, if the issue is not resolved, there is some speculation that there will be a mass exodus of lawmakers and aides from Capitol Hill, just as Congress is supposed to be addressing significant legislation such as immigration.

The issue may be even more dire for members of the House, as they are typically less wealthy than those in the Senate.

Rep. John Larson (D-Conn.) states that if the issue is not resolved, “I think we should begin an immediate amicus brief to say, ‘Listen this is simply not fair to these employees.’ They are federal employees.”

Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas) believes there will not be a resolution and that the fear of high costs will become a reality. “This is the law,” he contends. “It’s going to hinder our ability with retention of



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members; it's going to hinder our ability for members to take care of their families."

Sessions adds that lawmakers have been engaged in "quiet conversations" regarding the impending threat.

Veteran lawmakers are hopeful that if they retire this year, they may be able to remain covered under the current healthcare plan. Rep. Jo Bonner (R-Ala.) had already planned his resignation from Congress. And now his staff is being influenced by the effects of Obama's signature healthcare legislation: "I've lost one staffer," said Bonner, "who told me in confidence that he had been here for a number of years and the thought of losing the opportunity to keep his health insurance on Dec. 31 [forced him to leave]. He could keep what he had and on Jan. 1 he would go into that big black hole. And then I've got another staff member that I think it [ObamaCare] will be a factor as she's contemplating her future."

Throughout the year, Democrats and Republicans have discussed options to correct the problem, including administrative corrections.

"The leadership has assured members that fixing this issue is a top priority," said one Democratic leadership aide. "This issue must be fixed by administrative action in order that the flawed Grassley Amendment's spirit is honored and all staff and members are treated the same."

Of course, how correcting this issue will be perceived by the American people is another issue. The notion behind the Grassley Amendment is ultimately "what's good for the goose is good for the gander." Therefore, it stands to reason that if the provisions of ObamaCare are not sufficient for members of Congress, they are certainly not sufficient for the American people.

For some, the uncertainty is making it difficult to plan.

"Between the constant uncertainty surrounding sequestration, and the likelihood aides will soon be paying for the subsidy portion of their health care coverage, congressional office budgets are being squeezed once again, and it's causing a lot of concern amongst chiefs of staff regarding how to best handle the situation," said one chief of staff to a senior Democratic member of the House. "Do we give raises to junior level aides so they can afford to pay for their higher health care costs, and if so, where do we find the funds to do so? Additionally, leadership has been relatively silent in terms of providing guidance to offices, which is frustrating."

That is a feeling with which the American people are all too familiar. *Forbes* [reported](#) last month that businesses are citing "uncertainty over Obamacare" as a basis for not hiring new employees and insurers are blaming the healthcare law for skyrocketing premiums.

But with many in Congress believing that they deserve to be exempt from these woes, critics are wondering whatever happened to a government "of the people, by the people, for the people"?



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