



Physician-legislator Dr. Ritze Speaks Out Against ObamaCare

Dr. Mike Ritze is a physician and surgeon in private practice in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. He is also an adjunct professor, a state medical examiner, an FAA senior medical examiner, a private helicopter pilot, and a member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives. He received a 100 percent rating from The Oklahoma Constitution this year and was named the top freshman conservative by the publication. Dr. Ritze authored legislation to enable Oklahomans to opt out of the federal ObamaCare. His bill passed both houses with comfortable margins, but was vetoed by Oklahoma's governor, a Democrat. Dr. Ritze then sponsored an initiative that will be on the state ballot in November to permit Oklahomans to exercise the individual choice to opt out of ObamaCare.



Dr. Ritze is one of four distinguished physicians on speaking tours across the country as part of the "[Choose Freedom — Stop ObamaCare](#)" campaign of The John Birch Society. He was interviewed for *The New American* by Senior Editor William F. Jasper.

The New American: Dr. Ritze, You are both a state legislator and a physician; tell us first about your medical practice.

Dr. Ritze: I did my undergraduate work in zoology at Northeast Missouri State University, then on to Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Missouri. I was in north central Missouri. I came to Tulsa to do my internship residency in family practice. Then I went and got a Master's in forensic science from Oklahoma State University.

The New American: And you continue your family medical practice in the Tulsa area?

Dr. Ritze: Yes, I have a board certified family practice in Broken Arrow. I was also an Oklahoma Deputy State Medical Examiner for South Tulsa County in Broken Arrow. It's a volunteer position in which you have to have specialized training. I was also the police physician for the city of Broken Arrow Police Department, and Child Abuse Examiner. And I've delivered over 2,000 babies.

The New American: I imagine some of them may be old enough to vote for you now?

Dr. Ritze: Yes, we go knocking on doors, doing our neighborhood campaigning, and people will say that I delivered their kids. Even today, I saw a lady at the capitol and she come running up to me all excited. She worked for the city, and said, "Do you remember me?" And I said, "Kind of." She said, "You delivered the kids 30 years ago. We moved over here from the Tulsa area."



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The New American: I'm sure that's rewarding.

Dr. Ritze: It is, very much so.

The New American: You won election to the state legislature in 2008. What area does your House seat represent?

Dr. Ritze: South Tulsa County, Broken Arrow, Bixby, and the eastern part of the city limits of Tulsa. It's kind of a rectangle but it goes over a little bit into Tulsa, but it's mostly in Broken Arrow. I was elected with 72 percent of the voters voting for me. This year I was reelected unopposed. I'm proud to have been voted the top Conservative in the [Oklahoma] House of Representatives. I received a 100 percent rating this year from *The Oklahoma Constitution*, which has been issuing ratings for about the past 20 or 30 years. Last year I got a 93 percent rating because I had to take a day off to go to our son's college graduation and they chose some votes that I missed that day, so they docked me by 7 percent. So this year I wouldn't leave that desk — they would have had to carry me out; I wasn't missing any votes. I got 100 percent this year and was elected the top freshman conservative.

The New American: Prior to your own election you had been active in politics for many years helping other people get elected, right?

Dr. Ritze: I've worked on a lot of campaigns. I worked for Senator [James] Inhofe when he was actually mayor of Tulsa and then when he was state rep, then state senator, then U.S. congressman, then U.S. senator. I've worked on many congressional and state legislative campaigns and campaigns for Republican county chairman, precinct chairman, committeeman. I've worked on Senator [Tom] Colburn's House and Senate races. Just trying to "Wake the town and tell the people," as the saying goes.

The New American: I believe we first met 20 years or so ago when we were both speakers at a John Birch Society summer camp for high school and college students in Texas. You were the camp doctor as well as a speaker on constitutional and economic issues — and you played some pretty aggressive volleyball, as I recall.

Dr. Ritze: Those camps were a highlight for me and my family, and we taught a lot of young people to become involved in the freedom movement. I've been a Birch Society member since 1980. Done all the usual things: Chapter Leader, Section Leader, TRIM Chairman, ad hoc committees, County Fair committee, you name it, we've done it. I think we've built a really good organization.

The New American: All of that experience, activity, and your study of and knowledge of the issues must have helped because you seem to have hit the ground running, with a very active and successful freshman term.

Dr. Ritze: Well, I'm very blessed that I have some great colleagues in the legislature, but yes, all of that Birch Society background study and constitutionalist perspective, as well as nuts-and-bolts organizing, is paying off. The American people are very alarmed by what President Obama and the Democrats are doing, but they don't want more of the big-government, big-spending ways of the George Bush Republicans either — and it's not just the folks who are active in the Tea Parties who feel this way. We are the only state where all 77 counties went red, and that's not a tribute to McCain, I think it's a tribute to people who want constitutional government and they certainly didn't want Obama. Republicans took over the [Oklahoma] House six years ago and the Senate two years ago when I got elected, so we are a majority in both houses. And we will probably take over the governor's seat, which would be the first time in history of the state that Republicans control the governorship and both



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chambers of the legislature.

The New American: That would be important with respect to a number of bills you authored that passed both houses, but were vetoed by the [Democrat] governor. Tell us about your legislation.

Dr. Ritze: Well, first of all there is the ObamaCare bill. I authored the House bill in the Oklahoma legislature to allow Oklahomans to opt out of ObamaCare. Senator Randy Brogdon authored the Senate version. We got it through the House and the Senate with good margins. The governor vetoed it. At the same time, we turned around and had in place another bill which would go to the people, a constitutional amendment, that will be voted on by the people of Oklahoma in November. That would give the citizens in Oklahoma the opportunity to opt out, or have a choice to opt out of, ObamaCare.

Then there is the Firearms Freedom Act, modeled after legislation already passed in Montana, Tennessee, and other states, that exempts firearms and ammunition manufactured and retained in Oklahoma from federal regulation under the interstate commerce clause. It passed both houses — sponsored in the Senate by Randy Brogdon — but was vetoed by Governor Brad Henry. The same thing happened with legislation I sponsored allowing “open carry” of firearms in Oklahoma.

But one of my bills passed so overwhelmingly that even Governor Henry had to go along with it. My Ten Commandments Monument Display Act, passed with a vote of 83-2 in the House and 37-9 in the Senate. It provides for erecting a privately funded monument of the Ten Commandments on Capitol grounds. Our family, the Ritze family, will pay \$10,000 towards funding the monument. The governor signed it, even though the atheists and liberals are fuming over it.

I also authored three pro-life bills that passed, but were vetoed by the governor, one requiring parental consent before a minor can obtain an abortion.

The New American: As a physician, as a state legislator, and as a citizen of Oklahoma and the United States, you are quite seriously opposed to ObamaCare.

Dr. Ritze: Absolutely. Definitely. First of all it’s unconstitutional. Secondly, it’s just basically immoral. As you know it’s going to steal from future generations more freedoms. Freedom of healthcare is one of the most precious rights that we have in our republic. And, in spite of the many challenges we have with our healthcare system, the most serious ones are being caused by too much government already; we don’t need vast new layers of government. And we certainly don’t want to destroy the system we have in place; with all its problems, it’s still the envy of the world. But ObamaCare not only would destroy the world’s finest medical system, it would socialize our entire society far beyond any other socialist scheme tried thus far.

There is a quote attributed to [Communist-Bolshevik dictator] V.I. Lenin back in 1917: “You cannot completely socialize a society until you socialize health care. Once you grab health care, then nobody will resist you because they are afraid of where their health care is going to come from.” Some critics question whether Lenin actually said it, but there is no question that in every socialist and communist society the government has used control of healthcare to increase its dictatorial control over the people.

ObamaCare establishes a huge, gargantuan branch of government that will micro-manage our lives, telling people where and when and how much they can have as far as health care, and it will be very, very costly. It will subject each of us to huge taxes, fines, even prison sentences, if one violates the rules. It’s putting more than 16,000 IRS agents to work invading your privacy, going into your bank accounts. They can literally force us to have a withdrawal of funds from our bank accounts to pay for



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the government-mandated “premium.” They will take out X number of dollars for your healthcare, and anyone who doesn’t believe that the amount taken by the government will rapidly escalate is out of touch with reality. It will be a nightmare.

The New American: The British National Health Service (NHS), the Canadian Health Service, RomneyCare in Massachusetts – all of these continue to be held up as models that we should be emulating. What does your experience and study tell you about these systems.

Dr. Ritze: a friend of mine is a radiologist up in Alberta, Canada. In the whole province they have one MRI scanner that is 12 years old and it breaks down regularly. He can’t rely on it. In the city of Tulsa we have more MRI and CT scanners than the whole country of Canada has. That’s what the free market does.

Another friend of mine is an internist up in Toronto, Canada. He had a lady, 50 years old, come in with urinary bladder cancer. She could have been cured easily, and they put her off for five years and she died because of the rationing up there. The same week at the same clinic a man came in wanting a sex change and got it done in a week under the Canadian socialized medicine. It was politically expedient because he was homosexual. Most physicians can relate similar personal stories because it is so common.

In the Canadian system you can go outside the system and where do they come? There’s a term, they call it Fargoing, Buffaloeing, or Seattling; they come to border states in the United States to get their health. Many thousands of Canadians come down and pay cash to get good health care they can’t get up there. Under ObamaCare it will be against the law if you seek care outside ObamaCare. You’ll be fined and taxed and sentenced to prison, that’s the ultimate plan everybody knows they have up their sleeve.

The New American: One of the things that has tilted many supporters toward ObamaCare is the spiraling cost of American medicine and healthcare. But how much of those skyrocketing costs are the result of previous federal mandates, taxes and regulations?

Dr. Ritze: As just one example, take the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Under Bush 41 (George Bush, Sr.) OSHA began an invasion of medical offices, putting tremendous burdens on us. Our group practice figured it was going to cost us \$5,000 extra per year to tag on the extra costs to abide by OSHA, which included stupid things like double-gloving, and they wanted us to do “safety” things like two-way dooring out of our laboratory, just crazy things. At our small local hospital with just 100 beds, the administrator told me he stopped counting at \$75,000 per year it was adding on to their costs.

I talked to an ENT [ear, nose, throat] doctor the other day, he’d been in practice for 20-30 years. He started off with one office girl, one nurse, one secretary and now he has 20 of them that are drowning in regulations that he has to comply with. And all that stuff adds up. It adds to the stress of the practice and a lot of them are just quitting. I know a neurosurgeon, 49 years old, at the peak of his career. He’s working on his MBA. He’s never been sued, but as soon as he finishes his MBA, he’s quitting his medical practice. He said, “I’m out of here.” Just couldn’t take all the government regulations, costs, and red tape anymore.

I know you have reported in *The New American* on the annual report from the Competitive Enterprise Institute called [“Ten Thousand Commandments,”](#) which assesses the impact on our economy of the federal government’s horrendous burden of ever-increasing, ever-costlier regulation. This year’s report put the price tag at over \$1 trillion!



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The New American: So, when ObamaCare is repealed what then is Dr. Ritze's prescription for fixing the things that need to be fixed with regard to healthcare?

Dr. Ritze: What people have to realize in healthcare, is that opting out of ObamaCare is not enough, it's a complete circle of what are you going to do when the ball is in your court, when you are responsible for your own health care. And that's the direction we have to go in. That much should be obvious by the bare fact that our governments — federal, state, and local — are bankrupt and hopelessly in debt. They have been spending like the proverbial drunken sailor, but as I often point out, that analogy does a terrible disservice to the drunken sailor. First of all, the sailor is spending his own money, and second, when he runs out of money, the drinking binge ends. Not so with drunken politicians and their drunken constituents; they keep the binge going by borrowing and piling the debt for their debauchery on their children and their children's children. It's utterly immoral — and "unsustainable," to use an expression the Left likes to use, but never properly applies to their own policies.

Look at the fiasco of Medicare, where the government admits that tens of billions of dollars are lost through fraud every year. Professor Sparrow at Harvard estimates that 15-20 percent of the Medicare budget is lost to criminal activity, much of it not just to healthcare providers and institutions that over-bill for services, but to criminal syndicates that run shell companies that don't provide any services, just simply file hundreds of thousands of fraudulent claims for equipment and tests for patients that don't exist. According to Sparrow, that could be as high as \$70 billion annually — for Medicare fraud. And that's not even including the enormous waste and corruption endemic in the Medicare system that is evident in report that the Medicare trustees issued last year: Medicare is facing [\\$38 trillion in unfunded liabilities](#).

Only in government can you so astonishingly mismanage a program and then turn around and demand to be given even more authority, bigger budgets, and bigger bureaucracy. In the real universe — the private sector — you get fired, and probably prosecuted. But in the alternative universe of Big Government you get promoted! So now we're going to turn over all of our healthcare to the government that has made such a fiasco of Medicare? Most people don't realize that it is the abusive Medicare system that is greatly responsible for driving up the costs of healthcare so dramatically. They don't remember, or weren't around to remember, that Medicare was launched with the same kinds of glowing promises we're hearing now with regard to ObamaCare.

The American people must reclaim their heritage as free citizens and that means reclaiming responsibility; responsibility to take care of themselves and their families, and responsibility to be vigilant and assure that government stays within its proper bounds, principally, as defined by our federal and state constitutions. That means we must stop looking to government — especially the federal government — to provide for us the things we should be providing for ourselves: housing, clothing, food, jobs, healthcare, education, entertainment, etc. For those who can't agree with that on a philosophical level, then at least they'd better face up to the truth of it on the practical level: We're broke! And government doesn't have any money of its own; it has only what it takes from you and me and our fellow citizens — to be spent by politicians and bureaucrats, who are obviously wiser and more virtuous than we are.

So, what must we do? Well, first of all, we should undo as much of the harm that is already being done to our healthcare system by bad government policy. As a state legislator, for instance, I'm working on issues such as opening up more competition in healthcare. In the state of Oklahoma there are only



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about six major healthcare insurance companies. That's federal law and we need to, as a state, under the Tenth Amendment, go ahead and allow more, as long as they are approved by the state insurance commissioner. We need to allow more health insurance companies to come to our state. For example, the nation of Japan has 5,000 health insurance companies that people can choose from. Just like where you buy your car insurance, your homeowners insurance, you need to pick and choose the best policy that you want. You don't have to have a cookie-cutter approach to health insurance.

People need to accept responsibility to be better-informed health consumers. They need to go in and say, what's this going to cost. Go to physicians, go to healthcare professionals that are going to be basically on your side, your advocate.

I represent the needs of my patients in my family practice. I had a large family practice internal medicine group that I started. There were 10 of us and when I got elected to office I sold out but stayed in the same building and went to another office suite. I go out and I'll negotiate a better term with X-ray facilities, radiology facilities, labs, to get my patients the best price if they want to pay cash. People need to realize that health insurance is not going to be taking care of every little thing. It's there for a reason, for catastrophic events. We're also promoting HSA's, health savings accounts. When people become better consumers, they ask questions, what's this going to cost. I've been able to negotiate down, say on an MRI scan or a CAT Scan that can be upwards of \$1,000, I've gone out and negotiated with reputable facilities, if my patient will pay cash, what's your best price? You're going to get your money right up front. We can get this for one-third of that, say \$300 to \$400 to \$500 at the most. I'll ask people, or the lab, what discount can you give our patient if they pay cash. We usually can save them 25 to 50 percent on lab costs. This is something that people need to be aware of.

Find a doctor or health professional who's on their side, and who will tell them what things are going to cost. I don't have a problem, if a patient doesn't want a test done. As long as he or she understands, we enter into some type of legal documentation that they don't want the test done, I'll tell them fine. You can go without having the CAT scan or blood test. As long as they understand, it let's me off the hook. Oftentimes there is too much testing, unnecessary testing, done. And it's very expensive and drives up the costs.

The New American: You brought up the Tenth Amendment. Most Americans probably have at least a foggy memory about the first Ten Amendments to our federal Constitution, the Bill of Rights. Why is Tenth Amendment so important, especially to you as a state legislator?

Dr. Ritze: Legally, the federal government is limited by the enumerated powers in the Constitution, principally under Article I, Section 8. What that means is that there are only certain things that the federal government is *allowed to do* by the governed, the people, the electorate. Our Founding Fathers gave the federal government a sort of fenced-in area that they have to live within. They said, we're going to give you 19 enumerated powers and you have to stay within these boundaries. As I already mentioned, I was the author of placing the Ten Commandments monument on the capitol grounds, like Texas has. I always use the analogy that the first Ten Amendments to the Constitution are like the Ten Commandments. In the Ten Commandments the Almighty tells us, "Thou shalt not...", and "Thou shalt not...", and "Thou shalt not..." And that's what our Founding Fathers did with the Bill of Rights, the first Ten Amendments, they commanded the federal government [in effect]: "Thou shalt not infringe on the right to keep and bear arms, freedom of speech, "thou shalt not...", "thou shalt not..." And when they got down to the Tenth Amendment they said if we forgot something, you can't do that either. That's the Tenth Amendment. The actual text of the Tenth is very short, simple, and powerful: "The



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powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

It puts the icing on the cake, the cap on the bottle. It tells the federal government that they can't step out of bounds. And what that means to us as citizens is that if we ask the federal government to exercise powers that it has not been delegated by the Constitution, we are participating — wittingly or not — in lawlessness, in subversion, abrogation of the Constitution, the law of the land. This is even more serious for those of us who serve in an official capacity, as we have taken an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution.

What has happened is that the states — the legislators, the governors, the citizens — have forgotten about the Constitution through laziness or sloppiness. They have forgotten that the Founders warned that the Constitution is not self-enforcing, it depends on responsible, informed citizens vigilantly monitoring the government to ensure that it stays within its bounds, so that it remains the servant of the people, not the master.

The New American: You've already mentioned the exodus of doctors, that is already under way and will almost certainly grow if ObamaCare is allowed to go into effect. What about on the other end, are you aware of, or do you predict that young people are going to be less likely to seek to become doctors?

Dr. Ritze: I think there will be a shortage. Medical school admissions have dropped nationwide. Applicants, not admissions. I think again, that the government is going to try to cover it the same way that they are trying to do with the doctor shortage. They will increase the H1 Visas to bring even more foreign physicians. One of the major problems with that which is different from bringing in, say, foreign engineers or taxi drivers, is that it is much more critically important that people be able to communicate with their doctor in the English language. We have a state law in Oklahoma that all public documents have to be in English — licenses and things like that. We have many excellent doctors who have come here from other countries, but there is little doubt in my mind that as we become more dependent on foreign sources for our medical professions there will be more communication problems, more mistakes made, less personal care, and a deteriorating quality of medical care overall.

We have a daughter that is a third-year med student. She's very bright. All my life I wanted all three of our kids to go into medicine and healthcare. I come from several generations of physicians, I'm still excited for her, but I am very alarmed and saddened by what I see happening to our country, to the medical profession, and to our entire healthcare system.

The New American: The American Medical Association (AMA), the most well-known medical organization, endorses Obamacare. What do you say to people who argue that it's AMA-approved?

Dr. Ritze: The AMA leadership sold out a long time ago, which is why their membership has plummeted; they now represent less than 20 percent of physicians, most of whom are beholden to government for paychecks, facilities, research grants, contracts, and/or benefits. But they posture as the voice of medicine. They have become a tool of socialism. A specific example is AMA's partnership with the federal government in fastening the draconian coding system on us that is strangling medicine. The AMA has an exclusive contract, worth hundreds of millions of dollars, to produce the huge coding books that we all must use, and that are adding to costs and making the practice of medicine a constant, expanding headache. So, they've been bought off with a guaranteed revenue stream and can



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ignore the concerns of the vast majority of physicians who put patient care as their top priority.

The New American: Are you positive about the prospects for repealing ObamaCare?

Dr. Ritze: I'm absolutely positive. I've been in the freedom fight for several decades and have never seen this kind of widespread awareness, concern, alarm, and involvement — all across the country, not only in Oklahoma. As a Bircher, it could be lonely, at times, talking about the Constitution, the Tenth Amendment, state nullification, the Federal Reserve, the dangers of Big Government. Now these things are commonplace in many circles. The economic crash has caused many people to sit up and wake up, as have the many alarming intrusions of government under Presidents Bush and Obama. Dr. Ron Paul's presidential campaign, and his ongoing Campaign for Liberty, as well as the Tea Party movement, the Internet's alternatives to the controlled, so-called mainstream news — all of these have opened things up and brought many new, motivated, constitutionally-oriented patriots into the process. But we have to continue encouraging a lot more Americans to get in this fight, and we have to continue encouraging those already involved to stay involved, to persevere, to refuse to give up or give in to the forces of omnipotent Big Government.

In the Oklahoma legislature we have very exciting potential. We'll have a brand new speaker in the house this year and a new pro tem in the senate. The house speaker should be a lot more responsive to us. And my having a little bit of tenure in there won't hurt either. We've elected some really good constitutionalists and we'll be electing some more in this next election. And, as I mentioned, we could end up with a much better governor. So, we'll be pushing a lot of constitutional issues that are much needed and long overdue.

The New American: Thank you, Dr. Ritze.

Dr. Ritze: My pleasure, keep up the good work.

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