



## Obama Advisor Jonathan Gruber: Abortion Saves Government Money

ObamaCare conspirator Jonathan Gruber has gotten 15 minutes of fame by being America's most cheeky liar of the moment. Now he's getting bonus minutes for being, critics say, a cost-benefit-analysis abortionist — and, perhaps, an advocate for euthanasia.

At issue is a 1997 research paper Gruber co-authored [entitled](#) "Abortion Legalization and Child Living Circumstances: Who is the 'Marginal Child'?" In it, he and his collaborators advance the thesis that abortion saves government money by killing off poor people — though he doesn't quite put it in those stark terms. Quoting how the paper actually does put it while grilling Gruber during Tuesday's Committee on Oversight & Government Reform [hearing](#), Representative Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) said to the MIT economist, "On page 20 you conclude that 'abortion legalization appears to be associated with an improvement in the average living circumstances and birth outcomes among a birth cohort.' And on page 26, you state that your research indicates 'that the legalization of abortion saved the government over \$14 billion in welfare payments through 1994.'" The congressman then asked Gruber, "Is providing more access to abortion, is that a worthy social outcome to achieve cost savings for the government?"



To again put matters in stark terms, Massie was asking if it was good policy to kill certain unborn babies to save money.

Gruber played artful dodger.

Massie then quoted another statement he attributed to Gruber, saying, "By 1993, all cohorts under the age of 18 were born under legalized abortion, and we estimate steady state savings of \$1.6 billion per year from positive selection." The congressman then asked, "What did you mean by 'positive selection'?"

After a bit more bobbing and weaving by Gruber, Massie stated that what the economist seemed to be



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saying is that “if we eliminate or reduce the number of poor people that are born, this will make life better for all Americans.” The representative then connected the dots and asked about ObamaCare’s Independent Payment Advisory Board, a rationing body some have likened to “death panels.” He asked, “If there are fewer elderly people — particularly poor elderly people — wouldn’t that save a ton of money, too?”

In other words, if saving money is a justification for killing the coffers-draining soon-to-be-born, is it not a justification for killing the coffers-draining soon-to-die? Doesn’t the economic imperative prescribing selective abortion also prescribe selective euthanasia? After all, both groups, supposedly taking more from the system than they put in, fall into the category “too poor to live.”

Unlike when Gruber let his hair down and [spoke about](#) the “stupidity” of the average voter, however, he maintained the scientist’s mask, replying, “I have no philosophy of abortion; I have no philosophy of end-of-life care. My job as an economist is to deliver the empirical facts [inaudible] ... can make the necessary...”

Now, this might strike observers as a bit disingenuous. Gruber certainly didn’t seem to worship at the altar of data and “empirical facts” when he boasted of how ObamaCare’s pitchmen, of which he was one, used deception to pass the bill. In fact, deceit is used precisely because the deceiver has an agenda (whether good or bad) other than just relating the facts, and because he knows that *the facts alone are not enough to advance that agenda*.

Of course, it is just common sense that everyone has some agenda. The notion of a “values free” economist is no more valid than that of values-free education or entertainment. As G.K. Chesterton once said, “In truth, there are only two kinds of people; those who accept dogma and know it, and those who accept dogma and don’t know it.” Everyone has opinions, beliefs, values; the only thing that varies is what they are and where a person’s greatest passions lie.

As to the latter, it’s entirely possible Gruber conducted the 1997 study out of cold scientific curiosity and that he pulled the subject of his research out of a hat of numerous possibilities. But since there are a thousand things an economist could possibly investigate, the probability is high that a choice he makes reflects his agenda and involves a point he wishes to get across — if only tacitly. This is true generally. As a journalist, I’d be less than honest if I said that the news topics I choose to cover are random; they’re issues about which I care.

None of this discredits Gruber’s data. It perhaps is true that aborting the poor’s children would save society money. Yet it’s certainly true that Congressman Massie is correct in saying that euthanasia is in the same category. And this is why great thinkers have told us that a person’s worth is not — and must not — be determined by his monetary worth to the collective, by an economic cost-benefit analysis. Related here, it’s also dangerous to assert that abortion and euthanasia can be morally licit if they’re good for society. As to this, Chesterton also [wrote](#), in the 1926 work *Twelve Modern Apostles and Their Creeds*:

It sounds harmless to say, as most modern people have said: “Actions are only wrong if they are bad for society.” Follow it out, and sooner or later you will have the inhumanity of a hive or a heathen city, establishing slavery as the cheapest and most certain means of production, torturing the slaves for evidence because the individual is nothing to the State, declaring that an innocent man must die for the people, as did the murderers of Christ.

Then also, some might even question whether Gruber’s death-panel mentality really does save money



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over the long term. The great French economist Frédéric Bastiat once [noted](#), “The bad economist confines himself to the visible effect; the good economist takes into account both the effect that can be seen and those effects that must be foreseen.” As to this, a critic might ask: If the acceptance of Gruber’s culture-of-death mentality degrades society morally, might it not have an effect beyond the obvious lack of respect for life? Might it not, just perhaps, encourage a degeneration in which people become less industrious, less dutiful, less creative, and less productive? Could it not engender corruption, and corrupted judgment, and eliminate the rule of law, economic freedom, and stability necessary for wealth creation and prosperity? And what if it leads to a characteristic dishonesty that creates a pay-to-play system in which even business contracts aren’t always honored?

Doing such issues justice is beyond this article’s scope. But if there is one thing Gruber and the ObamaCare fiasco has taught us, it’s that lies — and the existence of liars — certainly do cost us all a lot of money.



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