

THINKPROGRESS HEALTH

Heritage Foundation: 'Mandate All Households To Obtain Adequate Insurance'

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The Heritage Foundation's website declares that the individual mandate "violates personal liberty" and is "inherently at odds with the original vision of the Framers," but they conveniently forget to mention that the individual mandate was actually their idea. In 1989, the Heritage's Stuart M. Butler gave a lecture titled "Assuring Affordable Health Care for All Americans." Stuart's lecture disclosed Heritage's plan to reform the health care system, which called for an individual mandate:

If a young man wrecks his Porsche and has not had the foresight to obtain insurance, we may commiserate but society feels no obligation to repair his car. But health care is different. If a man is struck down by a heart attack in the street, Americans will care for him whether or not he has insurance. If we find that he has spent his money on other things rather than insurance, we may be angry but we will not deny him services – even if that means more prudent citizens end up paying the tab.

Many states now...require anybody driving a car to have liability insurance. But neither the federal government nor any state requires all households to protect themselves from the potentially catastrophic costs of a serious accident or illness. Under the Heritage plan, there would be such a requirement...Mandate all households to obtain adequate insurance.

Even Newt Gingrich admitted in the Republican debate on Oct. 20 that the individual mandate originally came from the conservative Heritage Foundation. In fact, many Republicans in the 1990s, including Charles Grassley (R-IA), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Bob Dole (R-KS), and Richard Lugar (R-IN), supported a national requirement for health insurance. As ThinkProgress' Igor Volsky writes, many of the GOP presidential candidates have supported the individual mandate, including Romney, Gingrich, Huntsman, and former candidate Tim Pawlenty.

Showing just how far to the right the Republicans have moved, the Heritage Foundation originally touted the individual mandate as a way to help "those who need it most" and make the "health care industry as efficient and consumer sensitive as possible." But now, from David Brooks calling his own Party not "fit to govern" to Pat Roberts calling the GOP field too "extreme," Republicans are moving so fast to the right that their own ideas can't keep up.

