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## Ezra Klein

Economic and Domestic Policy, and Lots of It

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## A lot of Republicans supported the individual mandate

By Ezra Klein



Newt Gingrich (Getty Images)

Yesterday, David at the Blue Mass Group [uncovered](#) a 1994 New Republic article in which then-Senate candidate Mitt Romney told John Judis that if he were elected, he'd support John Chafee's health-care reforms — which included a national individual mandate. Today, Huffington Post's Sam Stein follows up with an [article](#) arguing that Newt Gingrich also has a long paper record attesting to his support for an individual mandate.

I'd suggest we shouldn't act so surprised: The individual mandate was a Republican policy idea. It was developed as a [defense against single-payer health care](#). It was [endorsed](#) by the Heritage Foundation. George H.W. Bush [put together a plan with an individual mandate](#), but left it on the shelf because there was no way it'd pass in a Democratic Congress. It was present in the two main health-care proposals that Republicans released as alternatives to Bill Clinton's health-care reforms. This wasn't policy that a few Republican heretics were curious about. It was something that about half of the Republicans in the Senate affirmatively signed onto, policy that the most important Republican think tank backed, policy that a Republican president considered proposing. I won't go so far as to say it was official Republican Party policy, but it was pretty close. Look at the co-sponsors from [the Health Equity and Access Reform Today Act](#), the legislation that Romney spoke favorably of back in 1994. I've bolded the names of all the Republicans who were active in health-care reform during the last two years.

**Robert Bennett [R-UT], Christopher Bond [R-MO],** David Boren [D-OK], William Cohen [R-ME], John Danforth [R-MO], **Robert Dole [R-KS],** Pete Domenici [R-NM], David Durenberger [R-MN], Duncan



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Faircloth [R-NC], Slade Gorton [R-WA], **Charles Grassley [R-IA]**, **Orrin Hatch [R-UT]**, Mark Hatfield [R-OR], Nancy Kassebaum [R-KS], Robert Kerrey [D-NE], **Richard Lugar [R-IN]**, **Alan Simpson [R-WY]**, **Arlen Specter [R-PA]**, Ted Stevens [R-AK], John Warner [R-VA].

And then there was the [Consumer Choice Health Security Act of 1994](#), which included signatures from:

**Robert Bennett [R-UT]**, George Brown [R-CO], Conrad Burns [R-MT], **Daniel Coats [R-IN]**, Thad Cochran [R-MS], Paul Coverdell [R-GA], Larry Craig [R-ID], **Robert Dole [R-KS]**, Duncan Faircloth [R-NC], **Charles Grassley [R-IA]**, **Judd Gregg [R-NH]**, **Orrin Hatch [R-UT]**, Jesse Helms [R-NC], **Kay Hutchinson [R-TX]**, Dirk Kempthorne [R-ID], Trent Lott [R-MS], **Richard Lugar [R-IN]**, Connie Mack [R-FL], Frank Murkowski [R-AK], **Alan Simpson [R-WY]**, Bob Smith [R-NH], Ted Stevens [R-AK], Strom Thurmond [R-SC], Malcolm Wallop [R-WY].

That's a lot of Republicans who remain in perfectly good standing today. The idea that past support for the individual mandate is some weird quirk of Gingrich or Romney's past just isn't accurate. If you're talking about Republicans who were in any way active during the 1990s, there's a very good chance you're talking about Republicans who either supported or said nice things about bills that included an individual mandate.

By Ezra Klein | 02:00 PM ET, 05/12/2011

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