



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on April 12, 2010

Mitt Romney's Magic Act: Creating the Illusion Romneycare Is Different from Obamacare

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney won the Southern Republican Leadership Conference Presidential Poll April 10, defeating Rep. Ron Paul by a single vote, 438-437.

Behind Romney's victory is Romney's recent magic act: Campaigning against an Obama health care plan almost identical to the one he signed into law as governor of Massachusetts while at the same time positioning himself as the "conservative" Republican presidential contender. With his risible "conservative" packaging, the Republican contender has truly become the greatest pretender.



"Conservative" Romneycare was made possible only by many new tax increases, including gigantic income tax increases (as much as [\\$1,116 per family](#) in Massachusetts). Mitt Romney acknowledged on a March 7 *Fox News Sunday* [interview](#) that "We do insist that people buy insurance or pay their own way. And if they — if they don't buy insurance, they'll find that their taxes are higher." Romneycare's individual tax penalties are even stiffer than those under Obamacare.

Yet Romney has stridently campaigned against Obamacare even while defending his own record on Romneycare. Romney's "Free and Strong America PAC" has been campaigning for a "Prescription for Repeal," something Romney [describes](#) as a program "which supports conservative candidates who will work to repeal the worst aspects of Obamacare and restore commonsense principles to healthcare."

After Obamacare passed Congress, Romney wrote on the neo-conservative *National Review* [blog](#): "America has just witnessed an unconscionable abuse of power. His health-care bill is unhealthy for America. It raises taxes, slashes the more private side of Medicare, installs price controls, and puts a new federal bureaucracy in charge of health care. It will create a new entitlement even as the ones we already have are bankrupt. For these reasons and more, the act should be repealed. That campaign begins today."

The problem is that the Romney-care Mitt Romney helped establish in Massachusetts has identical planks with Obamacare. The Massachusetts state government notes that, in addition to controlling insurance prices, Romneycare consists of:

The lynchpins of Massachusetts' health reform law (Chapter 58 of the Acts of 2006) are: (1) the individual mandate, which requires adults in the state to be insured if affordable insurance is available to them; (2) the merging of the individual and small group insurance markets; (3) the expansion of MassHealth, Massachusetts' Medicaid program (4) the creation of the Health Connector, which administers Commonwealth Care, a new subsidized health insurance program for low-income residents, and functions as an insurance exchange that serves as a purchasing



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vehicle for individuals and small businesses; and (5) a set of new requirements of employers, including the Fair Share Contribution requirement and the requirement that businesses establish and maintain Section 125 (Cafeteria) Plans.

Thus, it's not surprising that *Newsweek* columnist Daniel Gross [opined](#) of Obamacare March 29: "Setting up this public-private partnership will require creating new infrastructure, managing a lot of moving parts, and dealing with powerful corporations and industry blocs. So who should President Obama appoint to be his health care reform implementation czar?... this sounds like a job for Mitt Romney." Gross [explains](#):

[T]here is the thing that disqualifies him from being the Republican nominee in 2012, which is the same thing that makes him best qualified for the job of health-care czar: He's basically already done it. In fact, he's the only executive who has done it. As countless commentators have noted (Alex Knepper from the right, Brad DeLong from the left, and David Frum from the spurned right), Obamacare largely is Romneycare. The concept of attaining near-universal health insurance in a defined geographic area using a combination of a mandate, subsidies, and cost-control efforts is essentially what Romney did in Massachusetts earlier this decade.

Thus far, Gross appears to be wrong only on one point. If the Southern Republican Leadership presidential poll is any indicator, Romney's actions toward government control of health care in Massachusetts have not "disqualified" him from being the Republican nominee in 2012. GOP leaders there accepted him as a conservative even though he had shepherded his own version of Obamacare in as governor of Massachusetts.

The question is, can Romney keep the illusion going?



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