



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on June 25, 2015

E-mails Prove Jonathan Gruber Was Prime Architect of ObamaCare

After being [caught on video](#) describing the deception that was employed to pass ObamaCare in light of “the stupidity of the American voter,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) economist Jonathan Gruber (shown), along with Democrats in Washington, has attempted to downplay his role as a key figure in the creation of the healthcare law. His recently released MIT e-mail archive, however, shows that he was indeed one of the prime architects of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).



The 20,000 pages’ worth of e-mails Gruber sent between January 2009 and March 2010, the period in which the ACA was being drafted, “show frequent consultations between Mr. Gruber and top Obama administration staffers and advisers in the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services [HHS] on the Affordable Care Act,” according to the [Wall Street Journal](#), which obtained the [e-mails](#) from the House Oversight Committee, which in turn obtained them from MIT. “They show he informed HHS about interviews with reporters and discussions with lawmakers, and he consulted with HHS about how to publicly describe his role.”

The e-mails also confirm that Gruber met President Barack Obama on at least one occasion and that he was considered a valuable asset to the administration in its push for the ACA.

Even before the brouhaha about Gruber’s remarks, the administration tried to keep his role as an ObamaCare consultant under wraps.

As *Forbes*’ Avik Roy [reminds us](#), Gruber was first trotted out by Democrats as an “independent expert” in the fall of 2009 after PriceWaterhouseCoopers projected that individual insurance premiums would rise sharply under ObamaCare. This, of course, conflicted with the administration’s assertions that the bill would significantly reduce said premiums, and so Gruber was called upon to testify in the Senate and be interviewed by the *Washington Post*’s Ezra Klein. In [that interview](#), which was also the subject of some of the newly released e-mails, Gruber said, “What we know for sure the bill will do is that it will lower the cost of buying non-group health insurance.”

Recalls Roy:

Gruber was no independent expert. The Obama administration paid him nearly \$400,000 as a consultant on Obamacare’s design, especially its new layer of federal health insurance regulation. But Gruber tried to avoid disclosing this conflict in his public commentary and appearances. Democratic officials did as well, in order to maintain the pose that Gruber’s opinions were non-partisan. Indeed, when Sen. Mike Enzi (R., Wyo.) specifically asked the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for a list of all its paid consultants, Gruber’s name was mysteriously omitted.

Then came the videos. In their wake, Gruber himself [denied](#) being “the architect” of ObamaCare.



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Democrats rushed to distance themselves from him, too. Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), speaker of the House when the ACA was passed (“so you can find out what is in it”), told reporters, “I don’t know who he [Gruber] is,” and declared in a blog post that “Gruber played no role in drafting the Affordable Care Act” and only “testified at one Senate hearing.” President Obama dismissed Gruber as “some adviser who never worked on our staff.”

As [FactCheck.org](#) points out, Gruber, in fact, made three appearances in the Senate. In addition, “We found seven instances of Gruber being cited on Pelosi’s leadership website, and the *Washington Post* dug up November 2009 comments by Pelosi, in which she specifically named Gruber in citing his work.”

And while it is true that Gruber was a consultant, not an administration staffer, as the e-mails and other evidence demonstrate, he was hardly an outsider.

A February 2009 e-mail to Gruber from Ezekiel Emmanuel, special advisor for health policy at the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), said, “I understand ... there is going to be a contract with you that will allow us to work with you ‘guilt-free.’”

Queried by a *Politico* reporter in January 2010 about his writing articles about healthcare without disclosing his federal consulting work, Gruber e-mailed top administration health advisor Jeanne Lambrew: “Here is my proposed response — can you please let me know if you see a problem with this[?]”

Another e-mail to Lambrew that same day asked her to hold off on sending something. “Want to check with WH [White House] friends,” Gruber wrote, suggesting he was well-connected at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Gruber’s friends in the administration also apprised him of details that were supposed to be kept hush-hush. In 2009, Lambrew e-mailed Gruber “a set of specs plus the CBO estimate — totally close hold, the committee did not give me permission to share.” Another Lambrew e-mail reminded him that if he were asked where he got his information, “remember that you didn’t get any CBO estimates from me.” A 2010 e-mail from Obama’s economic advisor Jason Furman informed Gruber, “We got a deal with labor. Keep that very close hold.”

Other e-mails from Gruber provided administration figures with pro-ACA talking points, including his estimates of winners and “losers” from ObamaCare.

A July 19, 2009 e-mail from Gruber to Lambrew stated that then-OMB director Peter Orszag “just invited me to meet with the head honcho to talk about cost control at 11.” White House visitor logs confirm that Gruber met with Obama the next day — one of [21 visits](#) the economist made to the White House between 2009 and 2014.

In case any doubt remains as to Gruber’s central role in foisting ObamaCare on America, consider two more 2009 e-mails from Lambrew. In one, she thanked Gruber “for being an integral part of getting us to this historic moment.” In the other, she called him “our hero.”

“His proximity to HHS and the White House was a whole lot tighter than they admitted,” Representative Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), chairman of the House Oversight Committee, told the *Journal*. “There’s no doubt he was a much more integral part of this than they’ve said. He put up this facade he was an arm’s length away. It was a farce.”

Gruber’s status as an architect of ObamaCare is particularly significant in light of the Supreme Court’s impending decision in *King v. Burwell*, which challenges subsidies for insurance bought on the federal



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exchange because the ACA specifically states that such assistance is available only to those enrolled through state exchanges. In [another](#) of the videos Gruber and the Obama administration wish had never been captured, Gruber says:

What's important to remember politically about [ObamaCare] is if you're a state and you don't set up an exchange, that means your citizens don't get their tax credits — but your citizens still pay the taxes that support this bill. So you're essentially saying to your citizens, "You're going to pay all the taxes to help all the other states in the country." I hope that that's a blatant enough political reality that states will get their act together and realize there are billions of dollars at stake here in setting up these exchanges.

If one of the people largely responsible for the ACA says subsidies should be available only on state exchanges, one would think that ought to be good enough for the Supreme Court. And given what we now know, there's no way around it: Jonathan Gruber was an architect of ObamaCare.



Photo of Jonathan Gruber: AP Images



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