



Republican Balks at Complete Repeal of ObamaCare

The noble historian Tacitus recorded the events that occurred in Rome immediately after the destruction of the Republic and during the rise and establishment of the absolutism of the emperors who reigned in Rome after the death of Augustus.

The well educated men of the founding generation quoted Tacitus in many of their writings. Perhaps it was the commonality of their proximity to tyrants that attracted the Founding Fathers to a man who's own life ended over 1,500 years before their own time. So fond of Tacitus were the Founders that Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "I consider [him] as the first writer in the world without a single exception. His book is a compound of history & morality of which we have no other example...."



Tacitus wrote of the excesses of the reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, and those who reigned in the Year of the Four Emperors. He chronicled the debasement of society at large and the often gradual usurpation of powers that finally enslaved the men and women of Rome, reducing them to subjects where once they had been citizens.

By studying the admonitions in the works of Tacitus, perhaps the Founding Fathers believed they could craft the structure of the government of their own republic in a manner that would obviate a fate similar to that of the Eternal City.

One of the warnings gleaned by the Founders from the Annals of Tacitus regarded the means employed by the legislature to establish tyranny in a once free republic among a people accustomed to liberty. Tacitus wrote, "The more corrupt the state, the more numerous the laws." In our own time, no law is more voluminous and more corrupt than the two-headed hound of socialism known as ObamaCare.

As we approach the mid-term elections, many friends of the Constitution and foes of President Obama's health care legislation have fixed their fortunes to the changes promised by Republicans and those gathered around the Tea Party banner.

Students of history, especially the recent American past, resist the temptation to look to politicians of any stripe for salvation from the incremental development of despotism. Elected Republicans have contributed as much (and often more) than Democrats to the size, scope, and socialism of the national government. There is no balm in the GOP.

Congressman Joe L. Barton is a Republican whose response to the future of ObamaCare after the anticipated regime change that will come after the November elections illustrates the point made above about the principle of unreliability.

Barton is the ranking Republican on the Energy and Commerce Committee, and in a recent [telephone](#)



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[interview with Congressional Quarterly](#) he stated that he favors a “three-pronged approach” to dismantling the ObamaCare bureaucracy. “First,” *CQ* reported, “Barton would hold hearings and move a complete repeal ‘of everything after the enacting clause’ through his committee, ideally within the first 60 days.” However, *CQ* continued: “Then, he would push for replacement legislation that would retain some of the law.” That is, Barton does not want to eliminate ObamaCare entirely but to (as reported by *CQ*) “retain some of its more popular provisions.”

This posture is typical of the measured and mediocre attack on socialism that is nothing more than the shadow boxing of the loyal opposition that is tolerated (even encouraged) by the ruling party. In this case, the ruling party is not designated by an R or a D, rather by its devotion to the principle of eradication of constitutional restraints.

To determine which sections of the bureaucratic behemoth should be kept in the tub when the rest of the bathwater is thrown out, Barton recommends the empanelling of a task force. This task force would identify which parts of the program are essential and not eligible for elimination. The congressman specifically mentioned Medicaid as a potential agenda item to be tackled by his task force.

For months scores of Republican lawmakers (and those trying to become such) have promised that before the sun set on their first day in power the long, national nightmare of ObamaCare would be over. In keeping with the custom of the times, however, to man these reformers are purposely vague as to the specific road to repeal they would follow.

These would-be plutocrats are well instructed as to the benefits of such diaphanous details. Broad strokes and pallid pronouncements provide the smoke screen for their stupor and relieve the declarer of the accountability accompanying specificity.

Barton has decades of training in this parliamentary prestidigitation. Elected in 1984, the Texas A&M alum earned a name for himself as the primary co-author of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. At the end of the day, this legislative largesse for the energy sector represents nothing more than welfare for the wealthy. Oil companies received billions in tax breaks and incentives, hardly the sort of fiscal responsibility and dedication to adherence to enumerated powers necessary for the repair and restoration of our Republic.

Lest there be any doubt as to Barton’s commitment to cordoning off certain parts of ObamaCare from the Republican wrecking ball, the Texas congressman plainly stated, “Some of the stuff in the bill is not that bad.”

Frankly, the very existence of the bill is noxious and inimical to the principles of self-government, enumerated powers, and federalism upon which this nation was founded. ObamaCare, every clause, is evidence of the fatal combination of executive and legislative tyranny that should be a stench in the nostrils of every constitutionalist.

The final plank in the Barton medical care platform is a planned push for a Republican version of the legislation to replace the current law: “If Republicans are given the privilege of leading the House again, it’s imperative that we really deliver on these health care issues. We just have got to do it.”

These proclamations are evidence that there is no hope for our Republic to be found in the caucuses of either major party. If Joe Barton genuinely cared for the future of this country he would work tirelessly to repeal ObamaCare without reservation or accommodation. He would uphold his oath to protect, preserve, and defend the Constitution. He would manifest his faithfulness to this sacred oath by refusing to substitute one unconstitutional scheme for another unconstitutional scheme.



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Rather than marketing his “ObamaCare lite” legislative proposal, Congressman Barton would systematically set about repealing all such laws and taking special care to restore the temple of American self-government upon the cornerstones of liberty laid by our Founding Fathers and cut from the quarry of history mapped by Tacitus and other ancient historians studied by them. Otherwise, we are sure to follow their follies to our own demise.

Photo: Rep. Joe Barton gestures during news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington, March 25, 2010, to discuss legal challenge to the health care reform bill: AP Images



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