

How Obamacare Intimidates Young Adults

By Richard E. Ralston

By order of the President of the United States, young adults who opted out of Obamacare will soon receive one of those friendly letters that we all love from the IRS. An inspection of their income tax returns put these individuals on a list of those who chose not to sign up for Obamacare and instead paid, along with their taxes, the “individual responsibility penalty.”

Where, you may ask, did they come up with such an Orwellian phrase? Where did the government get the idea that they had the power to impose such a penalty?

Do not spend too much time on that question, as wherever they got it, U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Roberts ruled that the penalty is really a tax, you see, even though the government calls it a penalty. The Orwellian twist is certainly appropriate, because the IRS rats out these young adults to the Department of Health and Human Services not because they failed to pay this tax, but because they did pay it.

Now President Obama wants these citizens to receive his parting gift as he leaves office: an intimidating letter from the IRS pressuring them to submit to Obamacare insurance coverage.

The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) refers to all of this as “strengthening the marketplace by outreach to families that pay the penalty.”

In English, that means Obamacare is not doing well financially, so more young adults must be coerced into paying excessive insurance premiums to subsidize older participants.

That was the plan.

But young people have been unwilling to throw themselves on that sacrificial fire,

preferring to pay a penalty rather than outrageous premiums.

Millions of letters from CMS—who will, “in partnership with the IRS conduct outreach to families that paid the tax”—will soon arrive in the mailboxes of young people. After scouring tax returns, CMS will add the personal touch of “asking” individuals to pay for Obamacare premiums, which are more than the tax.

That is how the IRS and the rest of the government define outreach: obey and pay up.

We are seeing the unique combination of three characteristics of the Obama presidency:

1. The unprecedented use of the IRS for blatant political purposes: to punish individuals and organizations that do not follow the administration line.

2. Government by presidential decree, without congressional authorization, enforced by intimidation or threats.

3. The arbitrary sacrifice of large groups of citizens to other groups. In this case, younger Americans are forced to pay artificially high insurance premiums to subsidize premiums for older Americans—not because older Americans necessarily need subsidies (most have higher income than young people) but because of the political difficulty of letting them pay what the insurance actually costs. Young people must be made to pay more than what their insurance costs. Or else.

The loving hand of government-controlled medical care will always come to this: brute force, setting some groups of citizens against others, and medical care subordinated to the demands of a political spoils system.

Rather than tolerate this intimidation tactic by the president in a vain attempt to prop up Obamacare, we should tell him to take it all with him.

[Published in the *Odessa American* on October 25, 2016.]