

Harry Reid: Congress should not be forced into Obamacare exchange

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Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid stood up in opposition today to Republican Sen. David Vitter's proposed bill that would eliminate public subsidies of health insurance coverage for members of Congress and their staffs:

Via [WFB](#), Reid stated:

"If Republican senators believe they should bear the full cost of their own health insurance, they can without any change in the law can decline the federal government's employer contribution and pay their own way. They can even encourage their own staffs to do so. Why they would want to do that I don't understand but they can do that. But for Senator Vitter and his Republican allies to end the contribution for 16,000 hardworking federal employees, even after years of accepting the subsidy themselves is hypocritical and mean-spirited."

It's naturally convenient for those working in Congress and other areas of the federal government that their "employer" is the federal government. And since Congress controls the purse strings, the cost of its "employer" health care coverage has no ceiling as it would for, say, a small business. This isn't about being "mean-spirited," it's about being fair — something Reid and his fellow Democrats constantly claim to understand.

NRO's John Fund has [more](#) on Vitter's bill and Congress' exemption:

Senator David Vitter, a Louisiana Republican, has demanded a floor vote on his bill to end an exemption that members of Congress and their staffs are slated to get that will make them the only participants in the new Obamacare exchanges to receive generous subsidies from their employer to pay for their health insurance. Angry Senate Democrats have drafted legislation that dredges up a 2007 prostitution scandal involving Vitter. The confrontation is a perfect illustration of just how wide the gulf in attitudes is between the Beltway and the rest of the country — and how viciously Capitol Hill denizens will fight for their privileges. [...]

Senator Vitter says the OPM ruling has removed "the sting of Obamacare" from Congress. "Many Americans will see their health coverage dropped by employers, and they will be forced into the exchanges," he told me last week. "If Congress is forced into them on the same terms, it will be more likely to fix Obamacare's problems for others." The bill he and his co-author, Senator Mike Enzi of Wyoming, have drafted would make everyone working on Capitol Hill buy insurance through the exchanges — with no subsidies. White House officials and political appointees in the executive branch would also be required to obtain health insurance through the exchanges.