

Friday, November 14 2014

The Fix

Nancy Pelosi says she doesn't know who Jonathan Gruber is. She touted his work in 2009.



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By **Aaron Blake** November 13 at 12:41 PM

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Nancy Pelos Jonathan Gruber in 2009 and now (0:54)

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Thursday that she didn't know who Jonathan Gruber is, but she spoke about him in 2009 in footage surfaced by CSPAN. (CSPAN)

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Thursday that, not only did [Jonathan Gruber](#) not play a significant role in drafting Obamacare, but that [she doesn't even "know who he is."](#)

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Many have pointed out since then that Pelosi's office [has cited Gruber's work in the past](#). That's notable, but it's very unlikely Pelosi herself wrote those press releases herself or even participated in their drafting.

But then there's this: Pelosi herself has also mentioned Gruber and his work -- back in November 2009, at the height of the Obamacare debate.

Here's the transcript, via Nexis:

Q: As you know, the Republicans released their health-care bill this week. And I wanted to get your comment on the bill, and specifically on the CBO analysis that it would cost significantly less than the Democratic plan and that it would lower premiums.

PELOSI: Let me just say this. Anything you need to know about the difference between the Democratic bill and the Republican bill is that the Republicans do not end the health insurance companies' discrimination against people with preexisting conditions. They let that stand. That's scandalous, the fact that it exists. I don't understand why they have not

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heard the American people, who have said preexisting conditions should not be a source of discrimination.

And secondly, the Republican plan ensures about 3 million more people than now, and ours does 36 million people. So that's a very big difference in that.

We're not finished getting all of our reports back from CBO, but we'll have a side by side to compare. But our bill brings down rates. I don't know if you have seen **Jonathan Gruber** of MIT's analysis of what the comparison is to the status quo versus what will happen in our bill for those who seek insurance within the exchange. And our bill takes down those costs, even some now, and much less preventing the upward spiral.

So again, we're confident about what we set out to do in the bill: middle class affordability, security for our seniors, and accountability to our children.

Pelosi's office told the Washington Post that the minority leader meant that she didn't know Gruber personally.

"She said she doesn't 'know who he is,' not that she's never heard of him," Pelosi spokesman Drew Hammill said.

Hammill added: "We've cited the work of dozens upon dozens of economists over the years. As the leader said today, Mr. Gruber played no role in drafting our bill."

Pelosi clearly wants to distance herself and Obamacare from Gruber, given Gruber's controversial comments about "[the stupidity of the American voter](#)," and Democrats are going to argue that Gruber wasn't instrumental in the bill. But, as an architect of the Massachusetts health-care law and a consultant to the White House on Obamacare, he's been regularly cited by Democrats as an authority on this issue -- including, apparently, by Pelosi.

Gruber's controversial Obamacare comments, explained (2:56)

The Post's Jose DelReal explains why Affordable Care Act architect Jonathan Gruber's year-old comments about the historic law have Republicans so angry. (Jose A. DelReal and Nicki DeMarco/The Washington Post)

Aaron Blake covers national politics and writes regularly for The Fix.
