

have been the Bush administration's reform plan (had the administration not been distracted by other matters). After the rejection of "Hillarycare" in the mid-'90s, association health plans emerged as the centerpiece of pro-market, Republican thinking about health reform—essentially what would become Romneycare, extended via federal law to cover the entire country. So much for Mr. Romney's argument that his plan in Massachusetts was an expression of states' rights. His own party had bigger plans for the rest of the country, and they looked a lot like Obamacare.

But perhaps the clearest indication of the conservative economic values underlying the act is its reception by many Democrats. The plan has few champions on the left precisely because it is not a government takeover of health care. It is not a single-payer system, nor "Medicare for all"; it does not include a "public option," a health plan offered by a federal insurer. It is a ratification of market ideas, modified to address problems unique to health insurance.

Mr. Obama's plan, which should be a darling of the right for these principles, was abandoned not for its content, but rather for politics. Neither side is blameless here. The White House could not have been more ham-fisted in the way it rammed the bill through Congress. The Republicans in the House and Senate lashed back with a vengeance, sifting through the legislative colossus for boogymen like "death panels," and when they could not find things sufficiently alarmist, they simply invented them.

Clear away all the demagoguery and scare tactics, and Obamacare is, at its core, Romneycare across state lines. But today's Republicans dare not own anything built on principles of economic conservatism, if it also protects one of the four horsemen of the social conservatives' apocalypse: coverage for the full spectrum of women's

reproductive health, from birth control to abortion.

Social conservatives' hostility to the health care act is a natural corollary to their broader agenda of controlling women's bodies. These are not the objections of traditional "conservatives," but of agitators for prying, invasive government—the very things they project, erroneously, onto the workings of the president's plan. Decrying the legislation for interfering in the doctor-patient relationship, while seeking to pass grossly intrusive laws involving the OB-GYN-patient relationship, is one of the more bizarre disconnects in American politics.

Obamacare draws fire from this segment of "conservatives" because it fortifies the other side in their holy war. Coverage for birth control and abortion has not

been introduced by the law; but it has been neutralized economically across all health plans, as part of the plan's systemic effort to streamline fragmented health insurance markets and coverage.

The real problem with the health care plan—for Mr. Romney and the Republicans in general—is that political credit for it goes to Mr. Obama. Now, Mr. Romney is in a terrible fix trying to spin his way out of this paradox and tear down something he knows is right—something for which he ought to be taking great political credit of his own.

Source: From *The New York Times*, September 29, 2012. © 2012 The New York Times. All rights reserved. Used by permission and protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States. The printing, copying, redistribution, or retransmission of the Content without express written permission is prohibited.

Consider the source and the audience: The author is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington, D.C. Does that affect how persuasive his argument is? Could the same argument be made as effectively by a liberal writer?

Lay out the argument and the underlying values and assumptions: Kleinke's argument has two parts: one, that Obamacare is a conservative policy, and two, that Republicans have disavowed it for political reasons. What conservative values does he claim it supports? Why do conservatives refuse to own this policy? Why do liberals dislike it? What are the politics behind Republicans' refusal to accept the policy as their own?

Uncover the evidence: The author makes a logical, analytical argument for the conservative bona fides of the health care policy. Is there other evidence that would strengthen his case? Does the historical evidence of the development of the policy help?

Evaluate the conclusion: Kleinke clearly believes that Obamacare is the product of conservative values and policy development and that Republicans have dropped the ball by rejecting it. Is he right? Would other conservatives agree?

Sort out the political significance: Why would Obama have proposed a policy that was shaped by his opponents and is disliked by his own base? In the end, did that help him or hurt him politically? And what's the verdict for Republicans: are they helped or hurt by their rejection of the policy they helped to develop?