



# Gingrich Talks About the Individual Mandate

By Jake Tapper

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In the parking lot outside House Speaker Newt Gingrich's first event on Thursday, someone distributed fliers pointing out that the former speaker had in the past supported the individual mandate, requiring all Americans to purchase health insurance.

"As recently as May," I pointed out to him in our interview, "you said that you supported the idea that individuals should either have insurance or should have to post a bond. But you've also said that the individual mandate is unconstitutional. Explain that."

"I think a mandate per se is clearly unconstitutional because it means the Congress can require you to do anything with your own money under any circumstances, I think that's the argument of unconstitutionality in the long run," Gingrich said.

"But you supported it at one point," I noted.

"There was a time — there was a time in opposition to Hillary (Clinton), in Hillarycare that the Heritage Foundation and lots of folks supported it. The more we looked at it the clearer it became that it would lead the politicians to redesign the entire health care system in order to define the mandate. And that's why I began looking for alternatives."

He continued "What I was trying to find: is there a way to have people be responsible. You know, a significant amount of the uninsured in America earn over \$75,000 a year; they just make a decision they're just not going to buy health insurance, that if something happens to them their neighbors are going to take care of them.

"So we were trying to explore, is there a way to make sure that people will have some responsibility for paying their own health bills?" Gingrich continued. "Probably the person who's done the best job of that is **John Goodman** who developed a concept called Patient Power and he essentially would give you a tax credit if you want to buy insurance, and if you didn't want to buy insurance your share of the tax credit would go into a pool for the uninsured and if

something happened to you, you'd be taken care of by the pool of the uninsured. And so you'd be in a different league in terms of how you were handled and what happened to you."

So does he still think those who can afford health insurance but don't buy it should pay a bond?

"I think **John Goodman** may be the closest to having a solution to this, but it's a challenge," Gingrich said, "trying to find a freedom-oriented but responsibility-oriented answer to the question of health cost is a very big challenge."