

Two mothers, two points of view on Obama health reforms

March 23 2012, by Fabienne Faur

They're both 37 years old, both married, and both mothers of a seriously ill child.

But one is a Republican who fiercely opposes President Barack Obama's health reforms, and the other is a Democrat, who supports them.

Meet Holly Henderson and Robyn Martin, who stand at opposite ends of the debate over the [Affordable Care](#) Act that is the subject of a constitutional challenge which goes before the [US Supreme Court](#) next week.

Henderson's home in Fort Washington is filled with pictures of her four-year-old Paul, who she explains is underweight, "allergic to almost every food imaginable," and thus under close [medical supervision](#).

She and her husband Mick, 35, a [civil servant](#), have good [health insurance coverage](#), but she acknowledges that health care is "very expensive" and they have to fork out \$400 a month for [food supplements](#).

But as a Republican supporter and a practicing Catholic, Henderson rejects the cornerstone of Obama's health care reforms -- mandatory health insurance coverage for every American -- a matter of principle.

"People in general in America are very compassionate," she said. "They want to be able to help those in need... but it should be your decision if

you want to help, not because the government says you've got to help somebody."

She added: "It's a very slippery slope... for the government to say, 'You will do this, you will do that, you will pay for this product that we say you have to pay for.'

"What else you are going to make me pay for? It might be against my moral values," she continued.

And she has more questions. What if she were not covered? How much would the fine be? And if she refused to pay a fine, would she go to jail?

Henderson also bristles at what she calls the "one size fits all" aspect of the Obama plan.

"How do you really decide if my son has a health issue, or if someone has cancer, or if maybe you're perfectly healthy? Do I get the same care a healthy person would get? Does it mean my son doesn't get the care he needs?"

Henderson is disturbed, too, by the notion that religious-affiliated institutions, like other employers, must include coverage for contraception in their employee health -- something the Catholic church is strongly opposing.

"I'm very pro-life," she said. "To force the church to go against what its moral values are, I have a problem with that."

A few miles (kilometers) away, at her home in Waldorf, Maryland, Robyn Martin cradles Jax, who is seven months old. Jax, who has a twin brother, suffers from a serious heart condition that has already required several major operations.

The Affordable Care Act, as Obama's health reforms are formally known, "was very important for us," said Martin, who works for a public sector union and whose husband is a government employee.

Martin, a supporter of the president's Democratic party, considers herself well-covered, but there are two aspects of Obama's reforms that she regards as nothing less than "crucial."

The first is the abolition of any ceiling on health costs. Jax's first day in hospital cost \$150,000, she said, and given that he spent 21 days in intensive care, "we could have reached this lifetime limit before he was six months old."

"Another thing important to us is that before the law, this little boy would have had pre-existing conditions of his heart problems held against him in the future," she added.

That could have meant very expensive [health care](#) premiums for Jax when he grows up -- if he could get [health insurance](#) at all.

For Martin, "the peace of mind represented by this [health](#) reform is amazing."

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