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By [MEGHAN KENEALLY](#)

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Chief Justice John Roberts fled the country on Tuesday opting to take up temporary residence in an 'impregnable island fortress'.

Was it to avoid constant questioning over the Supreme Court's controversial ruling on health care reform? To get out of the glare of Republican ire after siding with the Court's liberal judges and deeming the law constitutional?

He waved such explanations off, saying instead that he was traveling to Malta to teach a two-week class at the Mediterranean island's University.



**Heading for a hideout:** Chief Justice John Roberts will be teaching a two-week course at the University of Malta and he arrived at the Mediterranean island on Tuesday.

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**Not talking: Chief Justice Roberts has avoided making any public statements on the Affordable Care Act except for the decisions released on the ruling, both of which he is now thought to have written**

His departure comes as new conspiracies are floated about his supposed flip-flopping on the health care decision, with the latest theory suggesting that he actually wrote both sides of the legal argument for the Affordable Care Act.

Last Thursday, the Chief Justice became the object of affection for many liberals as he was the deciding swing vote that gave the five-judge majority to allow the law to stand.



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In the following days, numerous reports have revealed various explanations about the months-long debate among the nine judges over the legality of the bill which would effectively force all Americans to buy health insurance.

On Saturday, a [CBS report](#) cited unnamed sources as saying that the Chief Justice started off siding with his fellow Conservative judges during their private debate sessions, but then changed his opinion and went on to write the majority opinion conclusion statement for the liberal approval of the law.



**Picturesque fortress: Roberts quipped about going to the remote island after the landmark decision he ushered into law**



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**Making history: The passage of the health care law was extremely controversial and seen as a landmark victory for President Obama who championed the law**

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That report said that the four conservatives, who were then left in the lurch as the minority, went on to write their opinion as a joint effort.

Such a move is extremely rare in the history of the Supreme Court, where each opinion is typically written by one justice from either side of the legal spectrum. As a result, they sign their name on the verdict and it is credited to them in public discussion and historical records.

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**Swing vote: By switching to the liberal side, Roberts effectively insured that the Affordable Care Act passed**

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Because it was supposedly done as a united effort, however, the minority health care opinion was left unsigned.

[Salon](#) reported today, however, that the reason why the minority opinion was left unsigned was because it was written mostly by the Chief Justice before he made the switch to the liberal side. Paul Campos wrote that a source 'within the court with direct knowledge of the drafting process' said that 'most of the material in the first three quarters of the joint dissent was drafted by Chief Justice Roberts' chambers'.



The question of what role he actually played in the minority's report will undoubtedly be speculation until one of the nine notoriously tight-lipped justices publicly confirms the rumors.

As for Mr Roberts himself, he is shying away from any such statements.

At a conference of 300 judges in Pennsylvania on Friday, he declined to answer any questions about the health care decision. He went on to say that it does not bother him that he cannot directly answer his critics.

Instead, he was focusing on enjoying his summer break.



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'Malta, as you know, is an impregnable island fortress. It seemed like a good idea,' he said of his then-pending trip.

#### Read more:

- [Roberts switched views to uphold health care law - CBS News](#)
- [Roberts wrote both Obamacare opinions](#)

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**Figure 2:** J.H. (February 7, 2017). Why the pope has taken control of the Knights of Malta. *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2017/02/07/why-the-pope-has-taken-control-of-the-knights-of-malta>

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**Figure 3:** Press Release. (June 23, 2016). Pope Francis Received the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta in Audience. Order of Malta.  
<https://www.orderofmalta.int/2016/06/23/pope-francis-receives-the-grand-master-of-the-sovereign-order-of-malta-in-audience/>

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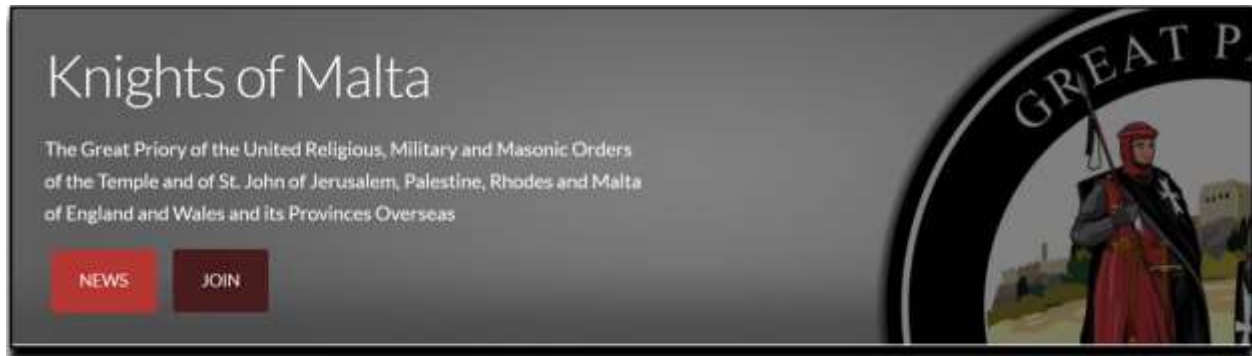


**Figure 4:** Queen Elizabeth in her Knights of Malta regalia.



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**Figure 5:** Knights of Malta. (Accessed May 19, 2020). The Great Priory of the United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta of England and Wales and its Provinces Overseas. <https://www.markmasonshall.org/orders/order-of-malta>

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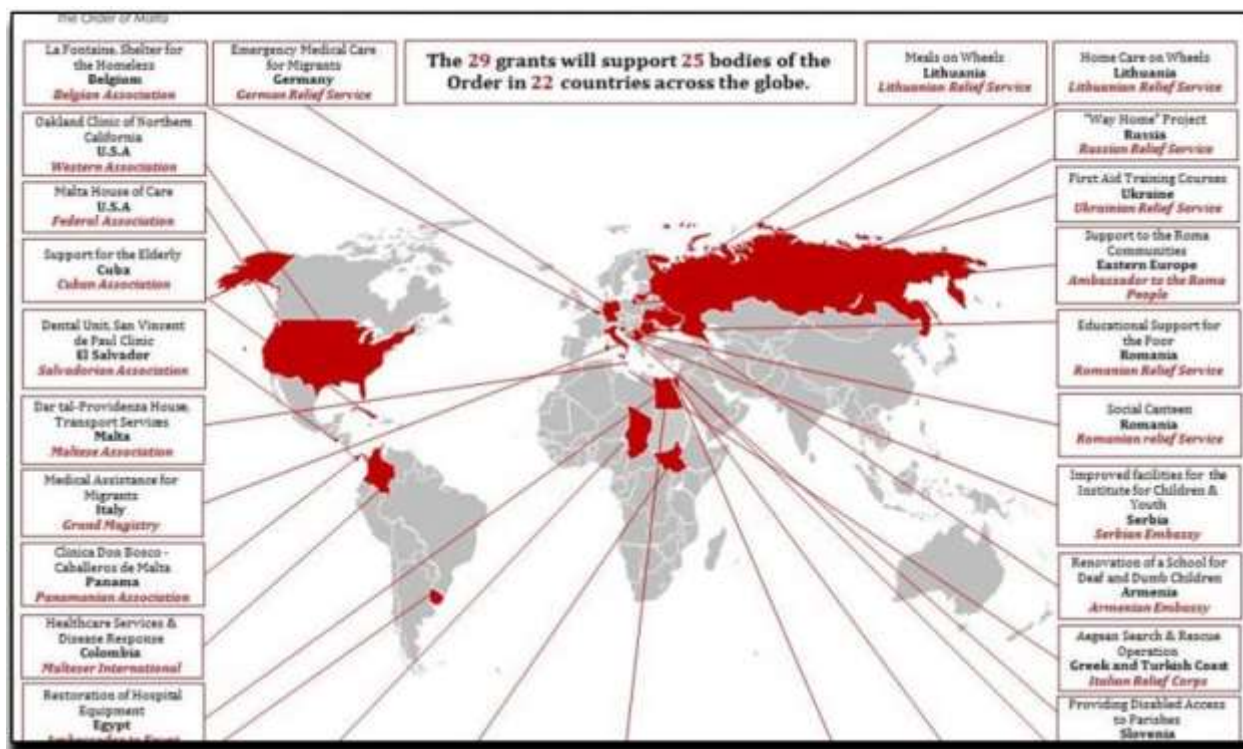
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**Figure 6:** Elected government of the Sovereign Order of Malta. The Sovereign Council assists the Grand Master in the government of the Order of Malta. It is composed of the Grand Master, who presides over it, the holders of the four High Offices (Grand Commander, Grand Chancellor, Grand Hospitaller and Receiver of the Common Treasure) and six members. Knights of Malta. (Accessed May 19, 2020). Sovereign Council. Order of Malta.  
<https://www.orderofmalta.int/government/sovereign-council/>

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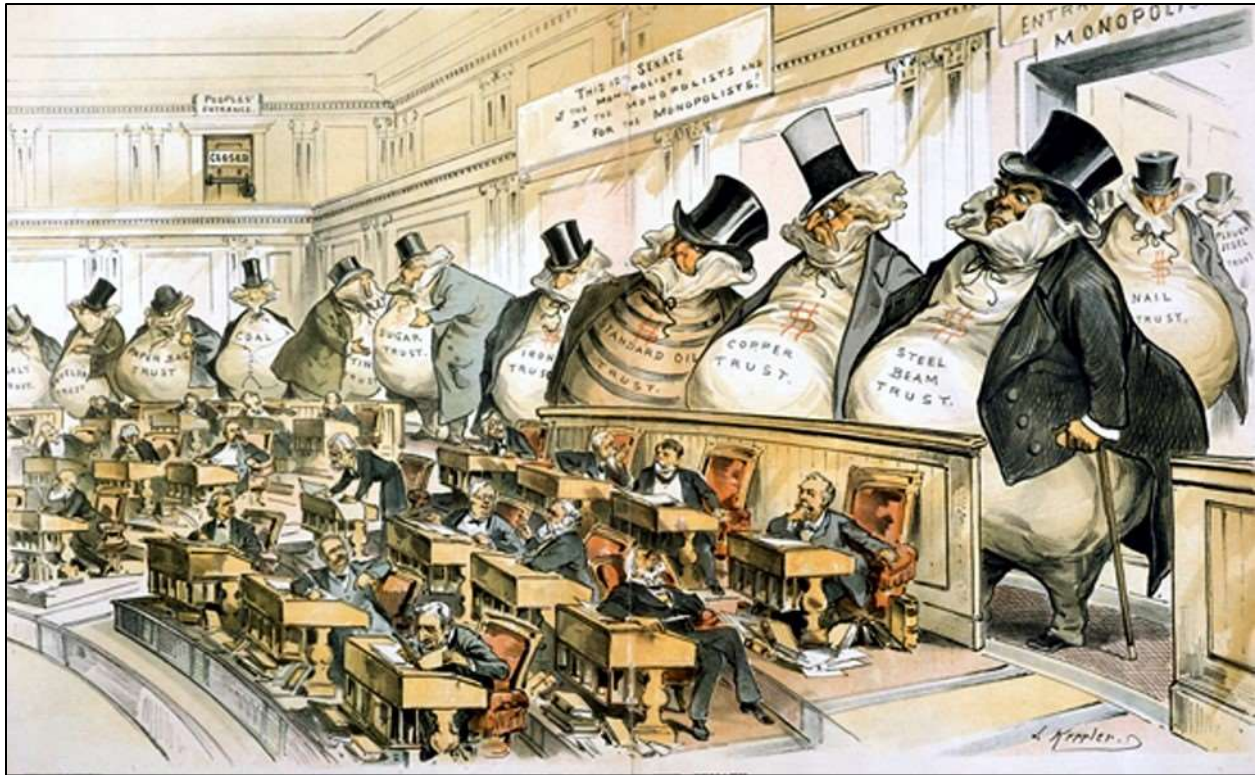


**Figure 7:** Press Release. (June 27, 2016). The Sovereign Order of Malta's Global Fund for Forgotten People distributed its 2016 grants on St. John's Day on June 24th. <https://www.orderofmalta.int/2016/06/27/global-fund-for-forgotten-people-distributes-29-grants/>



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