

## **Democrats to Use Budget Reconciliation Process to Move Health Reform Bill this Week**

House Democrats were mobilizing this past week for a full court press this coming week in an attempt to pass a health reform bill. The process will begin with the House voting on the bill that was passed by the Senate on Christmas eve. If passed, the bill would be signed into law by the President, but a second bill would be processed almost immediately that would make the changes in the Senate bill that House Democrats are insisting upon. Because the process being used for the changes to the law requires only a majority vote, only provisions impacting upon the budget can be included.

The bill would provide coverage to more than 30 million people who are uninsured, would require most Americans to carry health insurance, and would prohibit insurers from denying coverage to people who are sick.

While prospects for the bill appear more favorable than a week ago, there are still several unresolved issues that could prove fatal to the bill's passage, including the abortion issue. Republicans appear unified in opposition to the bill.

Potential passage of a significant reform bill has put the interest groups back on the airwaves, with a coalition of business groups, including the United States Chamber of Commerce saying it would spend \$4 million to \$10 million on a round of commercials to try to stop the legislation. America's Health Insurance Plans, the trade group for commercial carriers, also said it would buy more than \$1 million of television time to explain its version of why premiums have been dramatically increasing. Groups supporting the legislation also are spending on radio and television.

An initial vote in the House is likely to take place by Thursday or Friday. President Obama has delayed an overseas trip until March 21st in order to be available to assist in passage of the bill.

According to an AMA update earlier today, this afternoon the House Budget Committee will begin consideration of a reconciliation bill that will carry refinements to H.R. 3590, the Senate-passed health system reform legislation. The Budget Committee is scheduled to begin meeting at 3:00 p.m. and plans to stay in session until midnight.

A 2300 page bill has been posted on the Budget Committee web site. Importantly, this bill is NOT the vehicle that House leaders intend to bring to the floor. The language contained in this "shell" vehicle will ultimately be stripped out and replaced with new language that is not yet available for review. The AMA does not expect the true reconciliation bill language to be released before Tuesday.

Following the Budget Committee's action, the House Rules Committee will meet later this week and insert the final language into the bill before it is brought to the House floor for a vote.