

White House, Congressional Democrats Hope for Action on Health Care Reform Before Easter Recess

In recent days, Obama Administration officials and representatives of the Democratic leadership in Congress have suggested that they hope to take action on health care reform before a scheduled 2-week recess on March 29th. With Republican Scott Brown's election to the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts to fill the late Ted Kennedy's seat, the path to health care reform now means that the House must first pass the Senate bill. Then, both the House and Senate would use the so-called "budget reconciliation" process to make changes to the Senate bill so that the Senate could ultimately enact a bill by simple majority. According to the Congress, the budget reconciliation process has been used 22 times since 1980, 16 times while the Republicans controlled Congress and 6 times while the Democrats controlled. Congressional Republicans continue to insist that President Obama and the Democratic leadership in Congress scrap the entire health care reform effort to date and to start over, something the President and the Democratic leadership have consistently rejected. President Obama has indicated a willingness to consider four Republican proposals:

- a proposal by Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) to conduct random investigations of providers receiving reimbursement under the federal health care programs;
- expanded medical malpractice demonstration projects;
- higher Medicaid reimbursement for physicians; and
- permit health savings accounts to be offered through the health insurance exchanges.

This offer was insufficient to bring along Congressional Republicans.

Yesterday's Sunday New York Times included the following editorial captioned, *If Reform Fails*: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/07/opinion/07sun1.html?th&emc=th> .