

RELEASE IN PART  
B5

**From:** Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 25, 2009 2:44 PM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Fw: Health Care Update

**From:** Rodriguez, Miguel E  
**To:** Abedin, Huma; Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J  
**Sent:** Fri Sep 25 14:41:48 2009  
**Subject:** Health Care Update

I threw this summary together. Not sure if it is something folks are interested in, but if so, let me know and I can continue to provide periodic updates.

### **Health Care Update**

Senator Baucus concluded Friday's session of the Finance Committee markup at noon today. The committee plans to come back on Tuesday, September 29<sup>th</sup> to continue working. Given the large number of amendments remaining, it now seems likely that the markup will go on for at least a significant part of next week. At the start of the week there had been some hope that work on the bill would have wrapped up today.

The most significant event on the horizon is a showdown over the "public option" that some are seeking to add to the legislation. Senator Rockefeller had said Thursday that he would offer an amendment to add the public option to the bill on Friday. But he and Senator Schumer decided to postpone offering it. It will now be offered and considered on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

As you know, Chairman Baucus opposes the idea of including a public, choosing instead to back consumer-owned "co-ops" as an alternative method of providing competition with private health insurance companies and bringing down costs.

Rockefeller and Schumer have said previously that they are not optimistic about winning a vote in the Finance Committee but that they want to start debate about the topic before they make their real push on the Senate floor.

Senator Kerry offered and withdrew another amendment that will likely generate debate next week – a proposal to further limit the amount insurance companies can vary premiums based on age. Currently, there are no federal limits on how much insurers can use age to make premiums more or less expensive for individuals buying insurance. Many states have no such limits either. Kerry proposed limiting the amount insurers can vary premiums to no more than twice as expensive as the least expensive premium, based on age. Currently, Baucus's proposal limits that variation to four-to-one. Kerry withdrew the amendment, but Baucus said he would work with him on the proposal and hoped to include some version of it.

Below please find today's health care talking points

B5

### **Talking Points: No More Time for Delay**

- America's health care status quo is unacceptable and unsustainable.

- Premiums have more than doubled over the past decade – up five percent this year alone.
- 14,000 people a day lose their insurance, and lack of insurance causes at least 18,000 unnecessary deaths a year.
- We currently spend about \$2.5 trillion annually on health care, and if we continue on like this, in thirty years, we'll be spending one in every three dollars on health care costs.
- Yet despite the mounting evidence, there are some in Washington who wish to preserve the status quo for as long as possible. And recently they've been urging us to slow down and delay reform for another few weeks, or months, or longer.
- The truth is, reform's opponents know that, in Washington, the best way to kill a good idea is to stall it to death.
- One Republican Senator offered rare candor this week about why they want to delay action – he said they need a little more time to consult with industry lobbyists.
- Health care is a complicated issue and it's critical we take the time necessary to get it right. That's exactly what we've done.
- The House of Representatives has held **79 hearings** on health reform over the past two and a half years. The two Senate committees responsible for drafting legislation have held **nearly 150 bipartisan meetings** in just the past year alone. One of **them considered 287 amendments** when drafting its proposal.
- We've reached out to stakeholders across the spectrum – doctors, nurses, and hospitals; drug and insurance companies; business, labor, and consumer groups.
- Members of Congress, their staffs, and the Obama Administration have devoted **thousands of hours** to this effort and considered the widest possible range of ideas and proposals.
- As a nation, we **have debated this issue not just for years, but for generations.**
- So while President Obama welcomes constructive debate and sincere attempts to improve health insurance reform legislation before it reaches his desk, he will not tolerate attempts to stall reform to death or block reform for partisan political gain.

### **Miguel E. Rodríguez**

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Senate Affairs

Bureau of Legislative Affairs

U.S. Department of State

(202) 647-2645

rodriguezme@state.gov