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Thursday, November 4, 2010 4:40 PM EDT

New President key to health care repeal: McConnell

By Gerald Helguero

Republican goals for repealing healthcare reform include nullifying President Barack Obama's veto power by seeking to replace him in 2012 and compelling administration officials to defend the law over the next two years, a top Republican said on Thursday.

Hampering its implementation is more likely, according to political analysts.

While Republican Party members gained control of the House of Representatives in Tuesday's election, Democrats still control the Senate and President Barack Obama has veto power over changes to the law.

"Over the past week, some have said it was indelicate of me to suggest that our top political priority over the next two years should be to deny President Obama a second term in office," Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Thursday.

"But the fact is, if our primary legislative goals are to repeal and replace the health spending bill; to end the bailouts; cut spending; and shrink the size and scope of government, the only way to do all these things it is to put someone in the White House who won't veto any of these things," McConnell said at the Washington headquarters of conservative think tank the Heritage Foundation.

"We have to be realistic about what we can and cannot achieve while at the same time realizing that realism should never be confused with capitulation," McConnell said.

In addition to proposing and voting on repeals "repeatedly" despite expectations that the President will not sign them, "we'll also have to work in the House on denying funds for implementation and in the Senate on votes against its most egregious provisions," he said.

While proponents and opponents of the law differ on what to do about it, they are clear that the votes are there for slowing down implementation.

"The serious risk now is that opponents of the health reform bill, lacking the votes to repeal it, will have enough to cripple implementation, and that supporters will not have the votes or the determination to see that the reform bill is properly implemented," according to Henry J. Aaron, a Senior Fellow with the Brookings Institution.

David Boaz, executive vice president of the Cato Institute, says the Senate should move to block the "individual mandate" portion of the law, which requires individuals to purchase health insurance. For those who can't afford to buy insurance, the law has provisions for subsidies.

"But, of course, the Senate and the President aren't likely to go along with a repeal bill," Boaz said. "So the House should refuse to appropriate money to implement the bill's provisions, and prohibit the Department of Health and Human Services from spending any money to implement the bill's worst provisions - especially the individual mandate."