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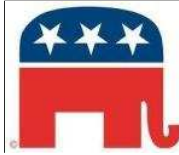
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GOP wins could mean health reform shake-up


November 03, 2010
 by **Brendon Nafziger, Writer**




With Republicans capturing the House in Tuesday's elections, the Obama administration's health reform law is on their radar, but experts say shooting it down could be tough.

Although GOP leaders have pledged they'll try to repeal "Obamacare," the Democratic control of the Senate and the threat of Obama's veto make it unlikely they could outright undo the legislation, experts say.

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Still, the GOP could throw up various roadblocks, try to overturn unpopular aspects of the bill and even haul senior health officials over the coals. Rep. Joe Barton, a Texas Republican campaigning to chair the House Energy and Commerce Committee next year, has vowed to bring Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services boss Donald Berwick and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to Capitol Hill for hearings, Kaiser Health News reports.

"Every time there's some bad news about the law, they can hold hearings on it, and drag officials to Capitol Hill and read them the riot act," Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute, told CNN. "They can make the health care law even more unpopular than it already is."

Plus, with Republicans having picked up at least 10 governorships, some could join the 21 states involved in ongoing lawsuits against the legislation. Sam Brownback, a U.S. senator who won the Kansas gubernatorial race, has vowed to attack the law he calls an "abomination."

"If the Republican governors were to get together and say 'we're going to derail this train,' they could do much more to reverse the national health [law] than an effort to repeal it in Congress," Ross Baker, a political science professor at Rutgers University, told Kaiser Health News. "The governors could, without defying federal law, simply implement it inefficiently, throw sand in the gears."

As for likely targets on the bill, Republicans could go after a revenue-generating provision that requires companies to report to the Internal Revenue Service all purchases of more than \$600, which many small businesses find burdensome. The GOP would also likely set its sights on the individual mandate, requiring all Americans to buy health insurance, although many experts say with Obama's veto they're unlikely to overturn it.

The GOP also could try to axe a tax on medical device companies included in the health reform bill. Californian Republican Rep. Brian Bilbray, who introduced the Medical Device Tax Repeal Bill, H.R. 5615 this summer, hopes to kill the \$20 billion tax on medical device companies over the next decade.

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