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Obama presidency has been defined by health care

By: **JULIE MASON**
Examiner White House Correspondent
 March 21, 2010

It started, not surprisingly, with a summit.

President Obama just over a year ago began his signature legislative initiative in a venue that the course of time would show as his favorite and fallback: A White House summit, on health care reform.

"It strikes me that now is exactly the time for us to deal with this problem," Obama said at the time. "Imagine the pride when we go back to our constituencies next year and say, you know what, we finally got something done on health care."

Lawmakers today are expected to consider the latest and possibly final version of his health care package in a controversial maneuver called "deem and pass," by which House members could approve the Senate's version of health care without logging a vote.

Over the course of the year, Obama saw initially strong public support for his plan fade. Opponents accused him of trying to socialize medicine and create "death panels" to kill grandma. And as the public soured on his program, voters turned away from its architect. Last April, Obama's job approval rating was 61 percent in the NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll. The poll out last week showed 48 percent of Americans approved of the job the president was doing.

Not all of the lost support can be attributed to health care, but broad opposition to the plan -- rising from 26

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» **August 2009:** Congress misses a White House-imposed deadline for passing reform; members return home to confront hardening opposition from constituents at recess town hall gatherings.

» **September 2009:** Obama addresses a joint session of Congress to urge progress on health care. Rep. Joe Wilson, a South Carolina Republican, shouts "You lie!" to Obama's claim his plan would not

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percent to 48 percent since last April -- has taken a heavy toll.

The president alternated between laying back and letting Congress develop a plan, to pushing his own ideas, then backing off, notably from including a government-run insurance program.

In the final hours, he stepped up his lobbying and arm-twisting, as his administration denied he was cutting deals and making threats to win support and punish deserters.

"This whole thing has been so weird," said Dennis Simon, a political scientist at Southern Methodist University. "When they started out, the idea was to do the exact opposite of what the Clintons did."

The Obama strategy rejected the failed Clinton administration method, which drafted a health care reform plan in-house then sent it to Congress, where it was defeated.

Allowing Congress to develop their own plan would make them stakeholders, Obama believed. And the strategy tracked his natural inclination as a consensus builder.

But the plan fell apart in Congress, where Republicans looking to regain their majority saw no upside in supporting the president.

"It was around July of 2009 that he lost his ability to fool most of the people," said Michael Cannon, a health care policy expert at the libertarian Cato Institute.

A series of contentious town hall meetings during lawmakers' August recess locked in what would become permanent opposition to reforming health care.

"There are still those in Washington who are resistant to change -- who are more willing to defend the status quo than address the real concerns of the American people," Obama told a University of Maryland audience in September. "Now is the season for action."

Health care reform looked to be on its last gasp, and journalists began writing the obituaries. Polls showed Americans wanted Obama and Congress to focus on jobs and the economy, not health care.

The end of January delivered a breakthrough of sorts. Obama addressed a Republican House retreat in Baltimore, fielding questions from opponents in a highly publicized event that administration officials believed could re-energize the moribund health care effort.

Obama followed up with another reform plan followed by another summit in February, but failed to achieve bipartisan support. Soon after, the president signaled he would accept any legislative means for passing reform.

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
provide free coverage to illegal immigrants.

» **November 2009:** The House passes a health care measure that includes a government-run public option.


» **December 2009:** The Senate passes a leaner version of reform that does not include the public option.

» **Jan. 19, 2010:** Republican Scott Brown's election to the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's seat deals a major blow to reform, as Democrats lose their supermajority in the Senate. » **Jan. 29, 2010:** With polls showing Americans want more bipartisan cooperation, Obama visits the House Republicans' retreat in Baltimore. Administration officials believe his performance gives the stalled reform effort new life. » **Feb. 20, 2010:** In his weekly radio address, Obama says it's time to move on health care reform. » **Feb. 22, 2010:** The White House Web site posts a revised version of health care reform called "The President's Proposal." » **Feb. 25, 2010:** Obama convenes another summit, hashes out issues but fails to persuade Republicans to join the effort. » **March 18, 2010:** Lawmakers miss another White House deadline to pass reform. Obama postpones an overseas trip to Guam, Australia and Indonesia. » **March 21, 2010:** The House is expected to consider health care reform.

what the NRCC needs to do now



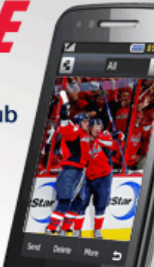
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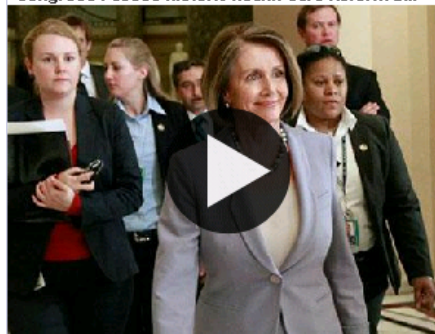


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The Obama Administration is not being defined by just health care. No, it has been determinedly defining itself by its gross incompetence, arrogance, ineptitude, hardline ideology, and limitless naivete'.

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This fool is too simple to be running our country by hook or crook. It is time to act to save the republic. All these conservative talk show hosts are mostly working to make you feel good with their corny jokes. It is now or never. The republicans are playing us just like the democrats and all of them need to be in prison. ACT NOW. Obama is no more than a snake charmer and he has a lot of snakes to work with. John Boehner, President Obama, Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid are no more than a bunch of cheap snake charmers.

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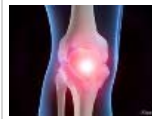
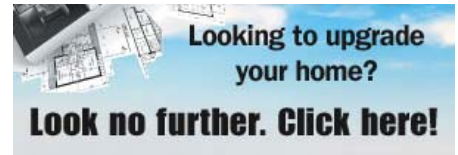
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