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Health Care Reform Debate Heats Up

Congress Get Earful From Constituents

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WASHINGTON -- Critics out-shouted supporters of health care reform at a couple of town hall meetings Wednesday.

Members of Congress are getting an earful in their home districts as the debate over reform rages on.

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There were supporters of health care reform at Sen. Ben Cardin's town hall meeting, but opponents were the loudest.

"I understand some of you have already made up your minds," said Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Md.

Cardin was shouted down at times during this town hall meeting in Maryland by citizens who want him to just say no to health care reform.

"You're not listening senator. You're not listening. You don't get it," said one citizen.

"If people try to disrupt, I think that's not what you should be doing at a town hall meeting, they come here to protest, that's not what you should be doing," Cardin said.

The latest Gallup Poll shows three in 10 Americans are undecided on health care reform, while the rest are evenly divided.

"There's no question there's a lot of direction and orchestration going on here from conservative organizations and organizations tied to the health industry," said political analyst Allan Lichtman.

Analysts on the right said that's not the case.

"These are folks who are generally upset about the direction of the country and health care bill is providing a good focus for that anger," said analyst Michael Tanner, with the Cato Institute.

The White House said the media is only covering the sideshow, not the real issue.

"The media tend to cover x said this, y said this. But some of you, not everyone, doesn't bother to investigate whether what x said is actually true," said White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs.

Gibbs said the president wants a rational discussion about reform and believes in spite of the protests that are what's taking place.

The president holds another couple of town halls later this week, one in Montana and the other one in Colorado.

A protest rally is planned for Friday when the president stops in Bozeman, Mont. Advocates for reform will also be there and are hoping to get into the event to ask questions.

Health care reform legislation will be at the top of the agenda when lawmakers return from recess in September.

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