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DeMint reaching outside of Capitol

By Robert Behre
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U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint helped scuttle national immigration reform last year not by trying to win over his fellow senators but by reaching out to people outside the U.S. Capitol, and he's now taking a similar tack with President Barack Obama's health care proposal.



DeMint

DeMint, R-S.C., is saying the best way to extend health coverage to the uninsured would be to make it easier for people to buy private insurance, not by expanding government programs.

"We're not trying to change the whole system with this. Basically, this plan is based on the idea: If you like what you've got, keep it. If you don't have insurance, we're going to make sure you can buy it," he said.

DeMint said his proposed Health Care Freedom Plan would insure 22.4 million more people within five years and could be financed by terminating the Troubled Asset Relief Program and requiring companies to repay their bailouts by 2014.

"What is working best right now is the private insurance model. It's not perfect, but it works best," he said. "What is not working and causing much of the problems in accumulating huge debts for our future are the government plans. What we need to do is expand that part that is working well."

DeMint said the Democrats' proposed reform would cost taxpayers trillions of dollars.

DeMint said he is not asking his fellow senators to sign on but is instead seeking support from groups like Americans for Tax Reform, the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation and others.

"We're going to try to inform the American people that there's a better way," he said. "The sheeples in the Senate will come along as they see more Americans identifying a (different) plan."

DeMint said those without employer-based insurance could receive \$2,000 vouchers (\$5,000 for families) to buy health insurance. It also would create a nationwide health insurance market by allowing people to buy insurance plans in any state. And it would reduce malpractice lawsuits against physicians and hospitals.

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