

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Democrats playing doctor

By Ralph R. Reiland

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As I'm writing this, they're in a panic in Congress, voting in the wee hours, bribing reluctant senators with millions in slush funds for their respective states, all to ram through a health reform bill that few if any of the lawmakers have even read, let alone intellectually reflected upon or debated.

They've already lost the public. In the most recent NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, support for the Democrats' health reform bills has dropped to 32 percent. In the latest CNN poll, the public is opposed to the Democrats' health reforms by a margin of nearly 2 to 1.

"Democrats are on a political suicide mission," notes Megan McArdle, economics writer at The Atlantic magazine's blog. "At this point, the thing is more than a little inexplicable," McArdle asserts, speaking of the unpopularity of the legislation and the subsequent likelihood that Democrats will lose seats in both the House and Senate in next year's elections.

"No bill this large has ever passed on a straight party-line vote or even anything close to a straight party-line vote," writes McArdle. "No bill this unpopular has ever passed on a straight party-line vote."

The Democrats' suicide mission is the result of their defining America's health care system as "broken," a system in such "crisis" that nothing short of an immediate and complete overhaul is required -- a task, unfortunately, that's beyond the skill levels of Barack Obama, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid.

Rahm Emanuel, Obama's chief of staff, described the strategy for power grabbing early on: "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste. And what I mean by that is an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before."

To get the "crisis" rolling so nothing short of a full restructuring is required, pharmaceutical companies, health equipment suppliers, hospitals and health insurance firms were painted as greedy profiteers while Obama charged that doctors were taking out tonsils for money instead of simply handing out inexpensive allergy medicines.

"Right now, doctors a lot of times are forced to make decisions on the fee payment schedule that's out there," declared Obama in a prime-time news conference. "The doctor may look at the reimbursement system and say to himself, 'You know what? I make a lot more money if I take this kid's tonsils out.'"

Added the president, talking alleged "sense" about America's supposed threat from predatory physicians, "I'd rather have that doctor making those decisions

just based on whether you really need your kid's tonsils out or whether it might make more sense just to change -- maybe they have allergies."

What's missing from Obama's teleprompter is the fact that 63 percent of men and 66 percent of women in the U.S. survive in excess of five years after being diagnosed with cancer, versus 45 percent of men and 53 percent of women who make it five years after diagnosis of cancer in Great Britain's government-run system.

Also getting the silent treatment is the leading role that American companies and researchers play worldwide in health innovations. "Eighteen of the last 25 winners of the Nobel Prize in medicine are either U.S. citizens or work here," explained the Cato Institute's Michael Tanner in Senate testimony on Sept. 30, 2009, while "U.S. companies have developed half of all new major medicines introduced worldwide over the past 20 years."

And so now the politicians, essentially inept, are all set to fix what they know next to nothing about.

*Ralph R. Reiland can be reached at [rrreiland@aol.com](mailto:rrreiland@aol.com) or .*

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