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Are co-ops the answer to healthcare reform?

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(NBC) - With healthcare now seemingly slipping off the political front burner, what might be needed to get the kind of reform that everyone agrees is needed?

The answer might be so called co-ops, or insurance exchanges.

Republicans said they're holding out for a plan that cuts deeper into healthcare costs before anyone's taxes go up.

Democratic leaders don't have the votes to roll over the Republicans.

Conservative Blue Dog Democrats still agree with the GOP.

The so-called public option, government insurance, is in trouble.

Some Senate Democrats are talking about co-ops as an alternative.

The uninsured would get a policy offered by private companies in a pool.

Still, some conservatives oppose co-ops and the public option.

"Either way, the government is going to give its program special advantages that are not available to private insurance," The Cato Institute's Michael Cannon said. "The government's going to increase the cost of private insurance."

The White House is non-committal, but insurance pools look now like Plan A, as the Obama healthcare reform plan moves through Congress.

President Obama, still steering clear of specifics, said it's the outcome that matters: Everyone covered, better care, and lower costs.



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