



The Rundown

A BLOG OF NEWS AND INSIGHT

HEALTH REFORM -- March 22, 2010

President Obama, Democrats Pass Historic Health Care Bill. Now What?

BY: JASON M. BRESLOW



President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden embrace in the White House following Sunday night's vote passing health care reform. (Photo by Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images.)

With **President Barack Obama set to sign into law** the most sweeping overhaul to the nation's health care system in decades, both parties will begin to shift their focus to either selling or distancing themselves from the landmark legislation ahead of this fall's midterm elections.

While **Sunday's vote concludes one of the most contentious legislative battles** in the nation's history, the political repercussions are likely to be felt for months and years to come.

For Democrats, a White House-led public relations blitz is set to kick-off immediately. Driving the message "is the belief among Obama's top advisers that Republicans have boxed themselves into a corner with unanimous opposition to the legislation and talk of a repeal," reports **the Washington Post's Michael Shear**.

That blitz will entail the efforts of a coalition of progressive groups, **according to Politico**, that "will sink millions of dollars into television advertising and sponsor grassroots events in swing House districts thanking Democrats for passing the law and highlighting its importance for average Americans."

Republicans, for their part, are promising to make health care reform the defining issue in this November's elections. Central to the GOP strategy will be **a push to repeal the law**. As Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., vowed last week, "There's an overwhelming likelihood that every race in the country is going to be a referendum on this issue this fall if this passes."

The fight will also play out in the courts, **reports the New York Times**, noting, "Attorneys general in three states -- Virginia, Florida and South Carolina -- have indicated they will file legal challenges to the measure, on the grounds that it violates the Constitution by requiring individuals to purchase insurance."

The Washington Post, the New York Times and the Wall Street

Journal put the bill in personal terms, offering explainers and tools to help figure out what it means for you.

But before getting too far ahead, there is still plenty of reaction to Sunday's groundbreaking vote. Here's a sampling:

"Make no mistake, it's a genuinely historic moment, a realization that only now seems to be dawning on people," **writes Josh Marshall of Talking Points Memo**. Even if health care reform costs Democrats their majorities in Congress come November, "they'll be able to say: This is what we used these majorities to do. And it was worth it."

"As of yesterday, America had the most screwed-up health-insurance system in the developed world," **says the Economist's Democracy in America blog**. "As of today, America probably still has the most screwed-up health-insurance system in the developed world, but it's significantly less screwed-up than it was yesterday."

"No matter what happens next, Obama's successful effort to reshape the country's social safety net is a turning point in his presidency," **writes Slate's John Dickerson**.

"As a piece of social policy, the health bill passed Sunday night by the House of Representatives ranks up there with the Great Society programs of Lyndon B. Johnson in ambition and scope. But here's one big difference: The Great Society programs were enacted in an era when Americans still tended to trust the government to get things done," says **Gerald Seib of the Wall Street Journal**.

According to the Atlantic's Clive Crook: "Remarkable as it may be -- and welcome, too, as I believe -- it is nonetheless a tainted victory.... What the country dislikes is this particular bill, and the Democrats, intent on arguing among themselves, barely even tried to change its mind."

"This is, of course, a political victory for President Obama, and a triumph for Nancy Pelosi, the House speaker," **says Paul Krugman of the New York Times**. "But it is also a victory for America's soul. In the end, a vicious, unprincipled fear offensive failed to block reform. This time, fear struck out."

"The bad part of the bad news is that this legislation would nevertheless inhibit our nation's ability to meet the basic human needs of its citizens. It would deny needed medical care to millions, even as it causes health-care costs to rise. It would sap individual initiative, destroy jobs, trap the poor in poverty and dependence, block innovations that would make us healthier and wealthier, and politicize matters that should not be politicized," **says the Cato Institute's Michael Cannon**.

John Nichols counters in the Nation, "The health-care reform that FDR imagined and Democrats in the House have finally enacted 'will stand the test of time.'"

Comments

Posted: 03/22/10 at 10:56 AM
KVM : Freeloaders of America, rejoice!

Posted: 03/22/10 at 11:02 AM
Sam : alas, what is unfortunate is that the amount of money that both sides will spend on their ads, etc post-act could be better used on education in this country. Maybe, then, just maybe over time we wouldn't HAVE to be subjected to a yearlong brouhaha because we would be more aware and thoughtful about politics and social issues, able to make better and more informed decisions. Then again, it may also be many years before such a sea change in American thinking and educational policy occurs. We'll see.

Posted: 03/22/10 at
surrendertoo : "KVM: Freeloaders of America, rejoice! Huh? How is paying your part freeloadng?"

11:14 AM

Posted: **Kevin D** : Nay sayers that were conned by big money interests, deceiving catch phrases, and lynch mob tactics, you have no idea how much you needed these changes. If you are ever unfortunate enough to suffer a serious medical condition only to find the "insurance" you thought you had is NOT what you really have, you may realize why all this was needed. Why not be up in arms over the fact your employer pays \$10,000 annually to insure you and you never get sick. Instead the anger is directed at those unfortunate to get sick.

Posted: **Realist** : The Healthcare Bill discussion is really so simple it hurts to see it passed. What did Government do with Social Security? They stole from it and bankrupted it. What did they do with Medicare? Establish an entitlement they couldn't afford and lied about paying for it. What makes anyone think that this Healthcare bill is going to be any different than those Government debacles? Are we that gullible and/or stupid? I guess so if we let this bill stand.

Posted: **Realist** : We should be ashamed as Americans if we let this bill stand. Hasn't history taught us how Government handles its programs? Social Security: they stole from it and now it's going bankrupt. Medicare: an entitlement they lied about its cost and now are scaling it back to pay for another Federal debacle. Shame on us if we let this happen.

Posted: **ronmurry** : as to realist, how can so much viciousness exist in one person.

Posted: **M** : In a country where the ADA has to increase its percent of daily values to compensate for the gross amount of disease causing diet, the USDA perpetually neglects to protect our health at the ground floor, and big business in the free market is our primary source of population information (so spun to one side or other) - Is it any wonder that this reactionary method of dealing with health care is so controversial. I suppose if we won't work to stop killing ourselves, the most mediocre thing we can do is make a national effort to help ourselves comfortably decay.

Posted: **Ani** : I am tired of watching the Republicans on health care reform and on other issues use this "be scared and let me protect you from it" tactic on their public. I would counsel a friend not to date someone who tried to manipulate and control like that. I really liked Paul Krugman's column in today's New York Times on the subject.
