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- [Al Qaeda Threat Grows from Yemen](#) 1 of 6



- [Sheen's Wife Recanting Knife Threat Story?](#) 2 of 6



- [Year in Review: Trends, Photos and Video](#) 3 of 6
- [Tylenol Expands Arthritis Pill Recall](#) [Tylenol Expands Arthritis Pill Recall](#) 4 of 6
- [Home Prices Up for 5th Month in a Row](#) [Home Prices Up for 5th Month in a Row](#) 5 of 6
- [Is Free TV Coming To An End?](#) [Is Free TV Coming To An End?](#) 6 of 6

Political Hotsheet

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Will GOP Call to Repeal Health Care Bill?

Posted by Stephanie Condon



(AP / CBS)

Prominent conservatives are calling for congressional Republicans to campaign in 2010 on a pledge to repeal the Democrats' sprawling health care legislation, but political and logistical realities could make repealing the bill a promise that is hard to keep.

"I suspect every Republican running in '10 and again in '12 will run on an absolute pledge to repeal this bill," former Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich [said](#) Sunday on NBC's "Meet the

Press." "The bill -- most of the bill does not go into effect until '13 or '14, except on the tax increase side; and therefore, I think there won't be any great constituency for it. And I think it'll be a major campaign theme."

At least one influential conservative advocacy group is urging Republicans to take up the pledge: "This has an unusual ability to be repealed, and the public is on that side," Max Pappas, vice president for public policy of FreedomWorks, [told](#) Washington blog the Plum Line on Monday. "The Republicans are going to have to prove that they are worthy of their votes."

FreedomWorks, led by former House Republican leader Dick Armey, has continued to spur the anti-health reform "tea party" protesters into action over the course of the health care debate.

Repealing the health care bill, however, would take more than winning back a few congressional seats. Just as the Republican minority in the Senate has stalled the current health care debate, a Democratic minority could do the same to any repeal measure unless Republicans were able to pull together at least a 60-vote majority. The GOP would also have to overcome the strong majority Democrats now have in the House. Even if they were to win both chambers back, President Obama could veto any repeal measure at least through 2012.

"Anyone who thinks they'll be able to repeal ObamaCare is kidding themselves," Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute, [told](#) the Washington Independent. "If they want to stop it, they need to stop it now."

Meanwhile, Democrats contend they can campaign on the specific benefits voters will see as a result of the legislation. The White House lays out online the "[case for change](#)" in each state. For instance, they point out 3.8 million California residents could qualify for premium tax credits.

[CBSNews.com Special Report: Health Care](#)

"Republicans on the ballot next November who opposed the bill will be in the precarious position of telling voters they plan to rollback landmark health care reform which will have afforded coverage to hundreds of thousands in their state," Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee spokesman Eric Schultz [told](#) the Plum Line. "We absolutely intend to make Republicans look voters in the eye next November and make it clear they want to take affordable health care reform away from them."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell gave an [indirect response](#) when asked this weekend whether his party would promise to repeal the bill.

"There's no question that this bill, if it were to become law and frankly even if it doesn't become law, it will be a big, if not central, issue not only in the 2010 election but in the 2012 election," he said.

University of Virginia political science professor Larry Sabato told Talking Points Memo that pledging

to repeal the bill could create a problem of [political credibility](#) for Republicans.

Still, prominent conservative blogger Erick Erickson of Red State [blasted](#) McConnell for dodging the question of whether the party should pledge to repeal the bill.

"I have criticized Mitch McConnell repeated for wanting to beat the spread instead of actually beating health care... I stand by the comments," he wrote. "Often, politicians should actually say 'yes' when they mean 'yes' and 'no' when they mean 'no,' instead of dancing around the issue."




Meanwhile, Democrats have yet to even completely pass the health care bill -- or even finalize the language. Before the bill is ready for President Obama's signature, a conference committee made up of members of the House and Senate will have to [merge the two chambers' different health care bills](#). Then, each chamber will have to pass the new version of the bill.

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