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Kevin Mooney: Union bosses get major role in Obamacare management

By: [Kevin Mooney](#)

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September 2, 2009

Union officials are likely to fill key positions on committees making major decisions if President Barack Obama's government-run health care reform proposal becomes law, according to a new study by the National Right to Work Committee.

Sections 123 and 2251 of H.R. 3200, the version of Obamacare being pushed by House Democratic leaders, are of particular concern, according to NRTWC, because they could put union-backed appointees on new government committees that recommend mandatory health insurance benefits provided by private insurers, and personnel policies the bill describes as necessary "to ensure quality and adequacy" of the nation's health care workers.

Such provisions could put labor officials in positions to influence health care policies across the country, said Greg Mourad, director of legislation for the NRTWC, and to mandate that health care workers join unions.

"Big labor is guaranteed a place on the various committees, and that's something we see as a dangerous sign," said Mourad, the principal author of the NRTWC study. "The idea is to get the whole country on a model where you have teams of union stewards telling doctors what to do."

"In every section we cite, unions are guaranteed a place on the various boards, but the compositions of the boards are very flexible, and with Obama and his appointees naming the members of the various committees and commissions, all could easily be stacked by Big Labor sympathizers," he added.

For example, section 2261 of H.R. 3200 states that the Advisory Committee on Health Workforce Evaluation and Assessment is to have 15 members, which must include no fewer than one representative each of health professionals within the health work force, health care patients and consumers, employers, labor unions, and third-party health payers.

"That's 15 members, all appointed by Obama's [Health and Human Services] Secretary, Kathleen Sebelius, and the only one guaranteed not to be a union plant is the guaranteed employer representative," Mourad said.

The arrangement Kaiser Permanente Health Care Institute now has with 11 national unions to organize health

care workers into work-unit based teams has been cited by labor bosses as a possible model for forced unionization, Mourad said.

He also pointed to section 124 of H.R. 3200 as another potential avenue for unions to increase forced unionization. The section grants the secretary of health and human services vast authority to set terms for health care providers.

The Health Benefits and Advisory Committee created by section 124 would forward recommendations to the HHS secretary. Obama would appoint 17 of the 27 members on the committee.

Mourad said there was no limit to how many of his appointees could come from the ranks of labor union activists such as the Service Employees International Union.

"It's not at all a stretch for the HHS secretary or some other left-wing HHS secretary to say people have to be organized in a certain way for their plan to qualify," Mourad said. "The administration will first stack this committee and then use this power to force doctors, nurses and other medical professionals into these unionized plans."

The Senate version of H.R. 3200 includes language that could force home health care workers to join unions, according to the NRTWC study.

The Personal Care Attendants Workforce Advisory Panel created under section 3209 of the Senate bill is similar to those now used in California, where home health workers are forced into unions "under the false pretext of making sure they are compensated fairly," the study said.

No specific numeric representation is listed, but HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius is free to stack the board with labor personnel, Mourad said.

The study performs an important public service, David Almasi, executive director of the National Center for Public Policy Research, told *The Examiner*.

"It's amazing how many items they are trying to push through in this massive bill, and they don't want the people to have a good look at it," he said. "Unions are getting benefits with the health care bill, just as trial lawyers. This means they are also a prime mover behind the policies."

But Michael Tanner, a senior fellow with the Cato Institute, said the NRTWC was overstating the case concerning union appointees and their potential influence on health care.


"There are many good reasons to condemn the bill," he said. "There are too many boards and commissions, and there's too much bureaucracy. But I'm not sure why it's any worse if a union official is appointed to one of these boards than, say, the CEO of a drug company. Unions are not inherently bad. I just can't go where they're going. There's an assumption here that union members should never be in any government position, and I just don't hold to that."

A spokesman for SEIU did not return a telephone call seeking comment.

Kevin Mooney is a Commentary staff writer for The Washington Examiner.

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