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Republican Wish List Has Stark Differences And Surprising Similarities To Democratic Proposals

Main Category: [Health Insurance / Medical Insurance](#)
Article Date: 18 Sep 2009 - 6:00 PDT

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The Republican leadership lacks a flagship health reform plan, but a variety of ideas and proposals have emerged from rank-and-file members that outline the party's reform principles, [Kaiser Health News](#) reports. The GOP proposals share much with Democratic plans, but also focus on other approaches. They won't pass, but they could shape the debate.

Key ideas include: replacing the tax break for employer-sponsored insurance with a tax credit to each individual or family; replacing [Medicaid](#) with subsidies for low-income people to buy private insurance; capping malpractice awards; adding a competitive pricing feature to [Medicare](#) Advantage plans, effectively lowering their prices by forcing them to compete; and, allowing individuals and small businesses to form groups to buy insurance (Appleby, 9/16).

One of the leading GOP proposals, authored by Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla, also features a surprising idea, [Kaiser Health News](#) separately reports. It would create a commission responsible for "conducting and supporting research into the effectiveness, quality, outcomes and costs of medical services, as well as recommending guidelines and standards and making public its findings."

That mission is not very different from a comparative effectiveness panel Democrats established in the stimulus bill, drawing criticism from conservatives. Michael Cannon, of the Cato Institute told [Kaiser Health News](#), "A Republican price, quality and transparency panel could easily be morphed into a Democratic comparative effectiveness panel and easily morphed into a Sarah Palin death panel" (Appleby, 9/16).

Republicans denounced the most recent Democratic health reform plan, which was released Wednesday, after months of thus far botched efforts to gain bipartisan support, [Kaiser Health News](#) reports in a third, related story. However, the bill, "unveiled Wednesday by chairman Max Baucus, D-Mont., contains several provisions that were inspired by Republicans, including testing new ways to handle medical malpractice cases, creating avenues for consumers to cross state lines to buy insurance and immediately launching a high-risk pool that would cover people with pre-existing medical conditions (Pianin and Appleby, 9/16).

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