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The Examiner

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## POLITICS

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## Senate faces tough task in melding two health bills

By: **SUSAN FERRECHIO**

Chief Congressional Correspondent

October 14, 2009

*Even harder will be merging House, Senate versions*

Now that a Senate panel has won passage of a moderate health care reform bill, the real challenge lies with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, who must weave it together with much more liberal legislation in a way that can win the support of at least 60 lawmakers.



Given the divergent components of each bill, it promises to be a daunting if not impossible task.

The Senate Finance Committee voted 14-9 on Tuesday to pass an \$829 billion bill that expands health insurance coverage to 29 million people through billions of dollars in additional spending on Medicaid and subsidies. It requires millions of uninsured people to purchase insurance, and it increases access to coverage by, among other things, prohibiting insurance companies from dropping enrollees with pre-existing conditions.

But the bill leaves out a robust public insurance option, which many liberals consider the cornerstone of meaningful reform. A public option is included in the more liberal health care bill passed in July by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and many Democrats are demanding that it be part of the final compromise.

Reid has suggested he will try to come up with a compromise, knowing he will lose the support of several moderate Democrats if he attempts to put the public option on the floor in its pure form. Senate Democrats control 60 votes and cannot afford to lose any of them if they are to block a GOP filibuster.

Reid and the White House are reviewing

**A tale of two bills****HELP Committee bill**

- » Health care coverage for 97 percent of legal residents
- » Robust public option
- » Employer mandate to provide insurance
- » Individual mandate to purchase insurance

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First Lady Michelle Obama visited the headquarters of the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington Tuesday. She devoted much of her talk to "the growing...

—Byron York

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This month the Atlantic is honoring 27 leaders who "embody the Atlantic's tradition of brave thinking." Among those "brave thinkers" chosen by the magazine...

—Byron York

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Reason Magazine editor Matt Welch poses the arresting question in the headline above in the November number of his rightly esteemed publication. It is a timely and important essay...

—Mark Tapscott

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according to the Congressional Budget Office -- and would not reduce the deficit or "bend the cost curve," a priority for Obama that is accomplished under the Senate Finance bill.

Today 83 percent of legal residents have health insurance. This would rise to 97 percent under the HELP bill and 93 percent under the Finance Committee bill.

The difference is a big point of contention among Democrats and even Republicans, who point out that the staggering cost of the Senate Finance bill fails to provide the universal coverage they initially promised.

But if Democrats increase coverage, the cost will also rise, which could alienate moderates in their party as well as Sen. Olympia Snowe of Maine, the only Republican who voted for the Finance Committee bill.

"Democrats may not be able to thread that needle, which is why an attempted government takeover of health care may die, again," said Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

If the Senate manages to get a bill passed, the biggest challenge of all may be finding a way to combine it with the House version. The House is waiting for the Senate to act before it begins melding three bills into a measure that will most likely mirror the liberal Senate bill but would provide even more subsidies for the uninsured and greater cuts to Medicare. Liberal House Democrats have threatened to vote against a House-Senate compromise bill that does not include a public option. With more than 80 lawmakers in their ranks, they could block final passage.

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Oct 14, 2009

This issue takes too long and this really sucks for those who cannot yet move on. Seems that the senator cannot move on also with this Health care issue! Think of all

the magazines about celebrities, even fake

celebrities, and the news coverage of what store they buy their socks at. A replaceable face with no intelligence or education – should anyone care? That's bluster over nothing – and a lot of you are gullible enough to fall for it! (It certainly explains George W. Bush.) Well, if you like a lot of that kind of nothing, but also alerts about free stuff and online coupons, and the occasional bit of actual news, or maybe some financial advice, check out the website Personal Money Store. It costs absolutely **nothing**, and you can even find the cheapest payday loans rates if you so desire.

**ggordon**

Oct 14, 2009

...and die it should. Rapidly.

The government has NO business intruding in healthcare as deeply as they have already. The low hanging fruit - tort reform, deregulation at a federal and state level - these guys aren't blind. They are just very hungry for power, money and their place in history. This is the most pathetic excuse for "leadership" that we have had in decades.

Now, get the hel\* out of personal lives.

Where are all of the "right to privacy" liberals that were always yelling about Bush? This is much worse than tapping phones of bad guys.

**Shanghaied**

Oct 14, 2009

A Repeal Ticket and toss the bums out in 2010 has my vote.

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If Rush Limbaugh becomes a candidate to own the St. Louis Rams, he could face serious opposition from other NFL team owners. [Full story](#)

**ENTERTAINMENT****Spanish tenor Placido Domingo accepts new \$1 million Birgit Nilsson prize in Sweden**

Spanish tenor Placido Domingo on Tuesday received the first ever \$1 million dollar Birgit Nilsson award at a formal award ceremony in Stockholm. [Full story](#)

