

The Future of Obamacare

Obamacare will jump over another hurdle today when the Senate Finance Committee passes the Baucus bill with the [support](#) (for now) of Republican senator Olympia "When History Calls" Snowe.

But health care reform is still far from a certainty. Baucus's health bill needs to be merged with the Senate HELP Committee's [much more liberal version](#); this new bill needs to pass the Senate; House Speaker Nancy Pelosi needs to merge the [three House bills](#); her new bill needs to pass the House; and, assuming all this happens, the House and Senate bills need to be merged and the final, mutant monster bill must pass both chambers before going to the president. Who knows if -- and when -- that will happen.

CATO's Michael Cannon, for one, [doesn't think it will happen at all](#). The rub, Cannon writes, is that "universal coverage is so expensive that Congress can't get there without taxing Democrats." New taxes will spur [special interest opposition](#), and "once the shooting starts, industry opposition will sway even Democratic members, because there are physicians and hospitals and employers and insurance-industry employees in every state and congressional district."

[Megan McArdle is skeptical](#):

I think it is more likely is that this thing passes, and fails spectacularly. There are too many moving parts, and if any of them breaks, the whole thing rapidly starts to spin out of control and eat a gigantic hole in the deficit. If it does break, I think that Democrats keep control of Congress just long enough to explain why they keep having to enact whopping new tax increases every few years. Republicans don't need to improve their message. They just have to wait for Democrats to recover their reputation as tax and spend politicians who woefully underpredict the cost of everything they propose.

The old adage from British politics is that "oppositions don't win elections; governments lose elections." And signing legislation that [raises taxes on the middle class](#), that will -- [if history is any guide](#) -- raise the price of individual policies, and that [the public opposes](#) is certainly one way to lose an election.

Posted by Matthew Continetti on October 13, 2009 02:15 PM | [Permalink](#)

Email the article The Future of Obamacare to a friend: