

Is health care reform hiding something?

By Stephen Bava
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I am writing today to update you on the latest health care news in the U.S. Senate.

Despite President Obama's stated desire to work with Republicans on a bipartisan reform bill, Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee are voting down common-sense Republican amendments. But why? Why would these amendments be voted down? Is there something to hide?

And please keep in mind, not all Democrats are for this. This is not an issue of right or left, it is about what is best for the nation as a whole.

As of Sept. 24, Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee blocked several proposals by Republicans, including:

- A requirement stating that before the committee can vote on final passage of the health care bill, the legislative language must be publicly available on the committee's Web site for at least 72 hours.

- An amendment preserving the Medicare Advantage benefits that millions of seniors currently enjoy and would lose under the Democrats' plan.

- An amendment prohibiting the establishment of a federal health care rationing board, which is, in essence, the "death panel."

- An amendment including medical malpractice liability re-

form measures to reduce costs of defensive medicine.

And that's not all. At a Sept. 23 hearing, we learned the cost of increased taxes on businesses in the bill will be passed on to consumers.

"We have analyzed this as largely falling on the consumer and it could happen in a couple of different ways," said Thomas Barthold, Chief of Staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation.

We also learned that this legislation will raise insurance premiums.

"Our judgment is that this piece of the legislation would raise insurance premiums by roughly the amount of the money collected," said Congressional Budget Office Director Douglas Elmendorf.

We should not spend a trillion dollars of taxpayer money on a health care bill that is not going to lower costs for consumers.

Here is an actual amendment, which was rejected by a 12 to 11 vote, and also some responses from several prominent politicians:

- Bunning Amendment: This amendment requires that before the Finance Committee can vote on final passage of America's Healthy Future Act of 2009, the legislative language must be publicly available on the Finance Committee's Web site for at least 72 hours.

- Sen. John Kyl (R-Ariz.): "This is an example of one of the

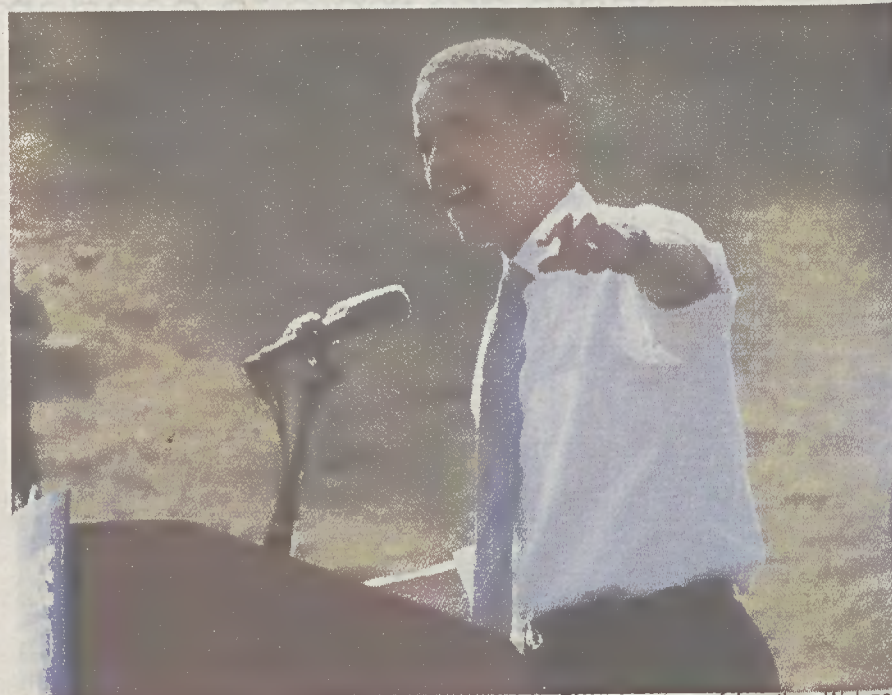


Photo courtesy of Jonathan Walczak

President Obama spoke in Asheville last October on health care.

most heavy-handed, unconstitutional actions that I can think of our federal government has ever attempted to take against private citizens and private organizations in this country because they disagree with the administration with respect to its ideas on health care reform" (Finance Committee, U.S. Senate, Sept. 23).

- Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.): "This is not right. It smells exactly like tough, hardball Chicago politics abridging the First Amendment. If we're not able to pass this amendment, we have reached a very dark day here on this committee" (Finance Com-

mittee, U.S. Senate, Sept. 23).

- Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.): "One of the things that we have learned over the years is that not all Medicare Advantage is created equal. Oregon and Washington have good, quality, efficient care, and in our part of the country it's a lifeline. Without good, quality, affordable Medicare Advantage, we simply don't have access to care for seniors" (Finance Committee, U.S. Senate, Sept. 23).

What conclusions do you draw from this? Why would these amendments be voted down? What is really going on with this "reform?"

Condoms

said. "They will then have small amounts of fluid on the outside of the condom at that point. While it may not cause pregnancy, it can definitely aid in transmitting STDs."

Another way to help prevent condom breakage is to use proper lubrication, which reduces the friction that sometimes leads to condom failure.

"I have a list of horror stories of things that people have used

as lubricants. Basically, anything that is oil-based is not an acceptable lube," James said. "When people use baby oil as lube, they might as well just not use a condom. Silicone-based lube is the most high-end option and it almost never dries out. Water-based lubes, on the other hand, will dry out."

For some men and women, latex allergies remain an issue condom companies are current-

ly addressing.

While Lifestyles, Durex and Trojan manufacture latex-free condoms, they are more expensive than latex condoms. Polyisoprene, polyurethane and lamb skin are the three nonlatex substitutions. Polyurethane is the thinnest option, while polyisoprene is more formfitting. Lamb skin is the only choice James cautions against due to the fact that the condom is a natural

membrane, and therefore slightly porous.

"They do not provide protection from STDs and they don't really provide protection from pregnancy. They are also righteously expensive," he said.

Condoms are just one of many contraceptive choices and experts recommend using them with other means of contraceptives, if possible, for extra protection.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21