

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

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TAP DANCING: BAUCUS BILL VIEWED SKITTISHLY BY DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS

Elisabeth Bjork
Staff Writer

In mid-September, Democratic Senator Max Baucus, Chairman of the United States Finance Committee, revealed his health reform bill: the Baucus Bill. Democrats have long awaited a health care bill such as this, so naturally one would think the Democratic-controlled legislature would jump at the opportunity to support this plan.

But a large number of Democrats and Republicans alike are steering clear of the bill. This strong reluctance was foreshadowed the day of the bill's reveal: According to Carl Cameron of Fox News, Baucus planned to reveal his bill with the other members of the committee, three Republicans and three Democrats, but not one of them fully supported him in his bill, so he had to stand solo before Congress.

According to Fox News, Democrats and Republicans did come together, but not for the bill; Baucus had tried to incorporate some aspects in the bill that would please Democrats and other aspects that would please Republicans. In doing so, however, he managed to offend both parties. Fox News states that, although Baucus is still hopeful that a considerable number of Republicans will grow to appreciate the bill, the majority of people believe the bill needs serious revisions before it can be a strong contender for a new health care system. One critic observed that there are red flags all around this bill because

numerous liberal Democrats do not support it as well as the predicted Republicans.

There are several reasons why this bill has met so much opposition. Republicans are mainly concerned that a health care reform such as this will mean higher taxes, a potential for a higher budget deficit, a less efficient health care system similar to systems found in Canada and other places, restricted freedom to choose what individuals do with their own earned money, and a further step towards socialism and an entirely government run and owned nation. Bill O'Reilly mentions in his website, www.billoreilly.com, "most of us value freedom and have a healthy distrust of government. Time after time, we have seen the feds screw things up: Iraq, Katrina, immigration, Vietnam, the war on drugs, public schools...the list is endless. And we are going to put our troubled appendix in the hands of these people?...Also, federal health care means all your medical records are in the hands of the government. Do you want that?"

Democrats, on the other hand, are generally highly enthusiastic about a new health care system, but the Baucus Bill is not quite what they have had in mind these past few years. According to Fox News, the AFL-CIO President John Sweeney expressed his disappointment in the following words: "[the bill] absolutely fails to meet the most basic health care needs of working families, and it fails to meet the expectations we have

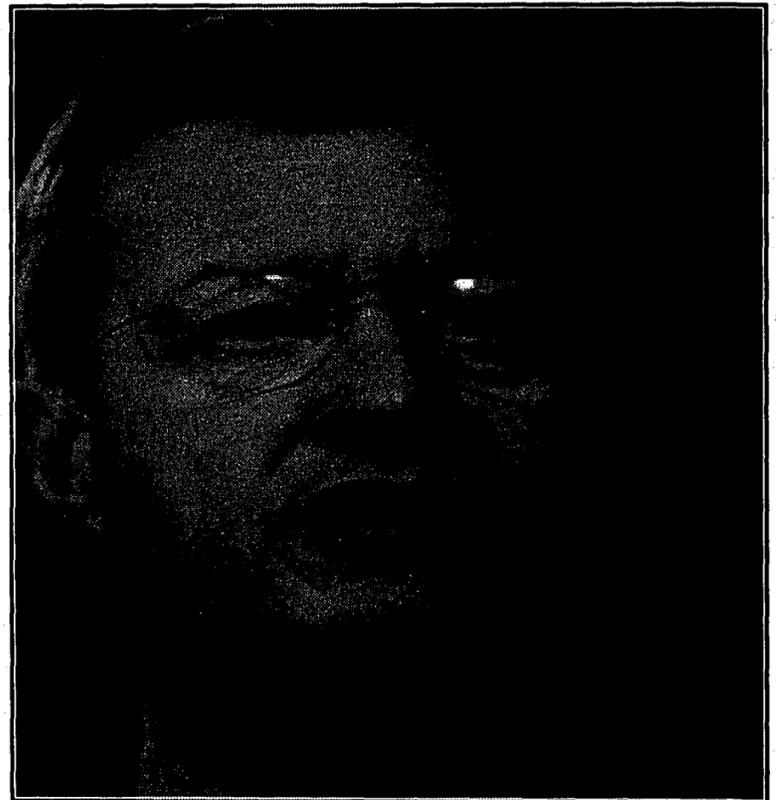


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set for our nation. The Senate Finance proposal, sadly, is little more than a throwback to the failed policies of the last three decades that advantaged corporations over taxpayers and bestowed special breaks on the wealthy while ignoring the middle class."

Even Senator Nancy Pelosi is not thrilled with the bill; she wants to make it more liberal. She states in an article posted on www.politico.com, "As this proposal evolves, we hope to see modifications that result in the Senate bill better reflecting the work of the House to make health care more affordable for all Americans and promote competition that is key to keeping costs lower. I believe the public option is the best way to achieve

that goal." However, private insurers fear the public option would put them out of business.

This bill is the closest thing to an actual health care plan that has been proposed. No concrete, generally satisfactory plans have been presented in Congress yet. Democrats now range from Baucus Bill supporters to quite a few who want something more original, to others who wish to make the Baucus Bill more liberal. They have been tap dancing around the health care reform issue for several months; even President Obama very vaguely mentioned his health care plan (which he has not quite revealed), in a speech earlier this

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a member but this fee is considerably smaller than those of other local gyms, and the facilities offered are impressive.

Another off-campus option for exercise is the Raleigh Greenway, which stretches from the NC Museum of Art through the Meredith campus and into Raleigh. Meredith students can get on the Greenway at the front entrance to campus and walk or ride bikes on it. This offers a great way to get exercise and to see a bit more of Raleigh.

The opportunities for exercise at Meredith are plentiful and varied, and hopefully this article has given readers new ideas for exercise. These ideas cannot add time to the day or rearrange schedules, but they can provide for exercise for all college students. A healthy Meredith student is a happy Meredith student, and that is a goal that all students should strive for.

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