



October 8, 2009

Dear Doctors for America member,

This week, members of Doctors for America traveled to Washington, DC to meet with the President and call for health reform this year. This [historic visit](#) to the White House by practicing physicians from all fifty states reflects two unique realities. One, that there is an unprecedentedly broad consensus among both individual physicians and physician organizations about the urgent need for health system reform this year. And, two, that physicians are taking on a responsibility to tell the public and Washington about the need for reform that we as physicians see, to an extent we never have before.

Engagement of this kind will be critical as Congress faces some of its biggest hurdles next week, particularly in the Senate, as it tries to merge disparate legislative proposals while combating increasing efforts to derail reform.

Physicians Making A Difference:

Highlights from the last week

- Dr. Charles van der Horst (NC) organized a doctors and patients [health care rally](#) in front of UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill, NC. Dr. van der Horst and Dr. Laura Svetkey also published an op-ed in the [News & Observer](#).
- Dr. Brahma Sharma (PA), together with 20 other physicians, met with Congressman Jason Altmire (D-PA) in Pittsburgh, PA to ask the, to-date reluctant Congressman, to support reform. He now does.
- Dr. Laura Helfman (TN) began wearing her new button: "I am a doctor, and I support health reform." These buttons are available in our Doctors for America [store](#) and will soon be available in bulk upon request.
- Dr. George Bahadue (FL) has given 42 talks in 60 days on health reform in the Miami area and throughout Florida.
- Dr. Nancy Babbitt (SD) became the new Doctors for America State Director in South Dakota
- Dr. Lila Rosenthal (CO) published an op-ed in the [Boulder Daily Camera](#)
- Drs. Alejandro Necochea and Zaneb Beams (MD) gathered medical students and other physicians at Johns Hopkins University at a happy hour to write emails to members of Congress.
- Dr. Michael Newman (DC) appeared on [FOX News](#), Dr. Mandy Krauthamer (DC) on [CBS](#), Dr. Hershey Garner (AR) on [PBS](#), and Dr. Zaneb Beams (MD) on [MSNBC](#).

Key Policy Developments

1. Preliminary Cost Analysis of Senate Finance Bill Released

The independent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released its much anticipated analysis of the Senate Finance Committee's amended health reform legislation, yesterday, concluding that the committee's bill would provide health insurance to an additional 29 million Americans while yielding a net reduction in the federal deficit of some \$81 billion over the next decade.

The cost of the plan, which stems largely from an expansion of Medicaid and an increase in subsidies to low- and middle-income families, was estimated at \$829 billion over 10 years. This cost would be more than offset by the savings generated by slowing Medicare growth combined with other spending changes and tax revenues, which would generate a total of \$910 billion over the same period. The bulk of these savings comes from specified changes to Medicare spending and from a tax on high-cost insurance plans.

The favorable cost estimate will be welcome news to supporters of health reform in the Senate eager to see the Finance Committee pass their bill this year. A final vote in the committee is now scheduled for next Tuesday.



Top 3 Stories

- NY Times - [CBO Analysis of Finance Bill](#)
- Slate - [Public option prospects in the Finance Committee](#)
- NEJM - [Reforms to look for this year](#)

What you can do this week

As the President suggested in the Rose Garden this week, what we see every day as physicians and medical students ought to be what drives the reform debate in Washington.

For that to happen, people need to hear our story. Here's how:

- **Start a conversation:** Change your e-mail signature to reflect the importance of health reform. We've seen:

Dr. (Jane Doe), MD
Doctors for America
Bringing Physicians' Voices to Health Reform
www.dr sforamerica.org

We've also seen:

Dr. (John Smith), MD
another doctor in support of health reform

- **Share a story.** We created a [webpage](#) so that people can see what happened at the Rose Garden and why it mattered.

Share that page, or some of the content on it, with other physicians and medical students you know, as well as with the public.

Also, if you're around DC today, consider attending today's NAACP-hosted town hall on Health Disparities at 7pm at Old DC City Council Chambers, 441 4th St., SW

2. Implications of CBO analysis for the public option

Yesterday's CBO analysis of the Senate Finance Committee bill is set to be an important factor in Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's (D-NV) efforts to merge the final Finance Committee bill with the previously passed Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) bill next week. Notably, the CBO found that the Finance bill's co-op proposal, inserted as an alternative to the HELP committee's public insurance option, failed to significantly affect both the number of uninsured covered and the federal cost of reform. This comes amidst [reports](#) of new efforts to forge a compromise in the Senate on the inclusion of a public option, including the possibility of establishing a robust national public option but leaving individual states the right to opt-out of the program.

Also of note is the scoring of provisions added to the Finance bill to improve affordability and decrease penalties to the uninsured which were actually found to result in greater deficit reductions without affecting the number of uninsured covered.

3. New Bipartians Support for Health Reform

A number of prominent Republicans voiced their support for current Congressional health reform efforts, in recent days, suggesting that the prospects for bipartisan support of a health reform bill may be increasing. On Tuesday former Republican Senate leader, Bob Dole, issued a joint statement with former Democratic Senate leader Tom Daschle urging leaders of both parties to support the health reform plans currently making their way through Congress. Mr. Dole joins several other prominent Republicans who have spoken out in favor of the legislation in recent days, including California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, former Senate Majority leader Dr. Bill Frist, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, former FDA commissioner and Centers of Medicare and Medicaid administrator Mark McClellan, and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson.



Thank you for your feedback, to date, on these weekly summaries. We're always open to suggestions and particularly like recommendations for items for inclusion!

Sincerely,

Milan de Vries and the Doctors for America Team