



October 15, 2009

Dear Doctors for America member,

This week, health legislation passed an important hurdle as the Senate Finance Committee became the last committee to approve its version of a bill, making this is the farthest that health reform efforts have progressed since Teddy Roosevelt proposed universal coverage in 1912.

Thank you to all of you who sent information for this week's update about what you've been doing. Now that committee work is completed and the full House and full Senate take up legislation, our activity in states across the country is going to play an even more important role. Please continue to email us at info@drsforamerica.org if you have suggestions for inclusion in this update or if you have feedback.

Physicians Making A Difference:

Highlights from the last week

- Dr. Rose Blackburne (DC), spoke about health care and advocacy at the NAACP Maryland State Conference.
- Dr. Selvoy Fillerup (AZ) developed a two-page document, that he shared with us, that he uses to talk to Senators about the public option.
- Dr. Lila Rosenthal (CO) and other local physicians met with Senator Michael Bennet's staff and with Congressman Jared Polis. Dr. Bradley Rosen (CA) met with Senator Diane Feinstein's staff.
- Dr. Nathan Brodie (OR) published an op-ed in [the Source Weekly](#). Dr. Irv Loh (CA) published an op-ed in the [Ventura Country Star](#). Dr. Nick Perencevich (NH) published an op-ed in the [Concord Monitor](#). Dr. Jessica Saxe (NC) published an op-ed in the [Charlotte Observer](#) (which we apologize for not noticing earlier).
- Dr. Tim McHugh (ID) became the new state director in Idaho while Natalie Hale and Dr. Paul Davis (AK) became co-State Directors in Alaska
- Drs. Ram Krishnamoorthi and Kohar Jones (IL) and other physicians met to write letters to the editor and plan upcoming activities.

Key Policy Developments

1. Finance Bill voted out of Committee

By a margin of 14-9 the Senate Finance Committee voted Tuesday to approve its version of health legislation. In doing so it becomes the last of the five Congressional committees to complete and approve a bill. The vote comes after months of bipartisan deliberation and consideration of over 500 amendments. Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) joined all thirteen Democrats on the committee in voting for the committee's bill.

Approval of the Finance Committee bill now moves the legislative focus of health reform to the full Senate. There all 100 Senators will be asked to consider a bill that is a combination of the Finance Bill and the previously approved Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee bill. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) is leading negotiations this week between Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) and Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT) of the HELP committee to produce this merged bill. Key Republican Senators such as Sen. Snowe as well as administration officials are expected to be kept involved in these negotiations.

The two Senate bills have much in common, including provisions to strengthen preventive and primary care, investment in the physician workforce, establishment of insurance exchanges to



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- Dr. Eleanor Greene (NC) spoke at a local medical society meeting.

- Dr. Nikhil Wagle (MA) spoke at a rally in Maine and at a town hall in Arlington, MA with Rep. Ed Markey.

- Dr. Persharon Dixon (MS) did an interview on Mississippi Public Broadcasting. Dr. Stuart Selkin (NY) was on the Ed Schultz radio show. Dr. Dan Morhaim (MD) appeared on [Fox Business News](#) to talk about the public option.

- Mike Stewart (TN) (who's married to a family physician and Doctors for America member) published an op-ed in the [Tennessean](#)

Which brings us to marriage, and our chance to congratulate Doctors for America Executive Director, Dr. Mandy Krauthamer on her marriage, this week, to Sam Cohen. We wish the newlyweds all the best.

Top 3 Stories

- Washington Post - [Health Legislation Passes in the Finance Committee](#)

- NY Times - [Medical Liability Policy Options](#)

- WSJ - [Insurance Industry Attacks on Reform Increase](#)

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promote competition, and increased regulation of the insurance industry. Negotiations are likely to focus on a few key differences including the extent of provisions to make insurance more affordable, the mechanism used to increase access, and the responsibility of employers to provide insurance.

The full Senate is expected to take up a combined health bill within the next two weeks. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) is leading a similar effort to combine House Committee bills and will present a bill on the House floor at a similar time.

2. Insurance Industry Attacks Reform. Report's Authors Admit Flaws

The Insurance Industry stepped up its attacks on reform this week by releasing two reports predicting increases in premiums to families if reform passes. Both reports have received heavy criticism from the White House, health care economists, and from independent fact checkers. One report was done by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) for the insurance industry lobbying group America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP). The second was paid for by Blue Cross Blue Shield and done by Oliver Wymann. The PWC report was subsequently undercut when the study's authors released a [statement](#) admitting they were asked to focus their analysis on only a few provisions of the Finance Committee bill and that consideration of the overall bill may alter their conclusions. The release of these reports may portend a new and more aggressive strategy on the part of insurers to counter reform efforts.

3. Congressional Budget Office recognizes the cost of defensive medicine

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a report, this week, showing potential savings from tort reform. Importantly, the CBO, for the first time, acknowledged that the practice of defensive medicine contributes to health care costs in this country. The CBO report only considered a specific set of measures similar to laws in place in Texas. While the CBO report did find these reforms could lead to savings nationwide, the



- Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor.

Want to write about what you see in the health system and what you think about reform? We can help.

Contact Megan Scott Smith at megan.smith@drsforamerica.org if you are interested.

savings would amount to only 0.5% of health care costs, making it unlikely that these specific measures will be broadly adopted. In the meantime, the Department of Health and Human Services continues to prepare to spend \$25 million on medical liability projects in states. The acknowledgement of the importance of defensive medicine is likely to now factor into the evaluation of these programs as well.

Thank you again for your feedback and for all you've been doing to make the voice of physicians part of health reform.

Sincerely,

Milan de Vries and the Doctors for America Team