

Dear Doctors for America member,

The House passed a health reform bill this week. Passage of the bill marks the first successful vote for a major expansion of health coverage in decades of trying. At the same time, the debate underscored the significant challenges that remain before Congress enacts reform. Many contentious issues remain, which threaten to fracture support for reform and the Senate, where a number of legislators still remain skeptical, is expected to begin legislative action next week.

The issues that drive this discussion - issues of access to care and delivery of care - are issues of fundamental significance to physicians and medical students. It is your insights and your experience with these issues that we seek to make heard in this discussion. And it is your willingness to be counted that makes that possible.

## Physicians Making A Difference:

### Highlights from the last week

- Dr. Zaneb Beams (MD) published a [column](#) on her everyday experiences in the health care system and why we need reform.

- Dr. Arthur Lavin (OH) and 500 fellow physicians sent a [letter](#) to Rep. John Bocchieri to ask him to support reform.

- Dr. Jan Sarnecki (WI) joined a [rally](#) in support of reform in Green Bay.

- Dr. Tracy Nelson (SC) participated on a [panel](#) about health reform for seniors in Myrtle Beach.

- Drs. Alonzo Patterson, Gary LeRoy, and Donald Nguyen (OH) helped spearhead a [rally](#) and [march](#) in Dayton in support of reform.

- Dr. Basim Khan (CA) published an op-ed in the [LA Times](#).

- Dr. Chris Hughes (PA) published an op-ed in the [Pittsburgh Post Gazette](#).

- Dr. Dan Thomas (UT) published an op-ed in the [Daily Herald](#).

### Upcoming Local Events:

- 11/12: Drs. Kathy Scheirman and Boyd Shook (OK) are hosting a [public forum](#) in Oklahoma City at 7pm at the Downtown Library.

- 11/14: This Saturday (CT), we are partnering with

## Key Policy Developments

### 1. Health Reform Bill Passes House

By a close margin of 220-215, the House of Representatives passed the Affordable Health Care for America Act (HR3961) late Saturday night. The vote followed eleven hours of debate in the House and consideration of two amendments. An amendment to replace the House bill with a Republican alternative bill was rejected on a party line vote. A second amendment, co-sponsored by Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI) and Rep. Joe Pitts (R-PA), to impose stricter limitations on the use of federal funds to pay for abortions was adopted, after a contentious debate, by a vote of 240-196-1. An earlier procedural vote also cleared the way for consideration of HR 3961, the "Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act" which, if passed, would negate a scheduled 21% cut in Medicare payment cuts scheduled for January. Consideration of HR3961 is expected to take place next week.

The vote on the House reform bill also followed intense last minute lobbying by both interest groups and citizens as well as a last minute visit to the Capitol by President Barack Obama, who emphasized to lawmakers the historic possibility inherent in their vote.

Additional Reading: [Wall Street Journal](#).

### 2. Focus of Health Reform Moves to Senate

Passage of reform in the House returns the legislative focus to the Senate, which is slated to take up the bill



# Weekly Update

November 12, 2009

the National Physicians Alliance and other groups to send physicians to an [interfaith candlelight vigil](#) in Senator Joe Lieberman's neighborhood (he has very publicly declared that he will filibuster reform if it contains a public option).

- 11:14: Also on Saturday, Dr. Heidi Sinclair (LA) is volunteering at a one-day free clinic in New Orleans organized by the National Association of Free Clinics. You can volunteer, too, by registering [here](#).

- Dr. Seanta Clark (SC) is organizing a public thank you to Representative Spratt for voting for health reform. Email us if you'd like to help organize it.

## Top 3 Stories

- Health Affairs - [House Reform Bill](#) (4 part series)

- NEJM - [Getting to the Real Issues in Health Care Reform](#)

- NY Times - [Controlling Cost](#)

## What you can do this week

### Give us your input

Yesterday we asked you to give us your input on the Stupak amendment to the house reform bill. Thank you to the over 250 of you who shared your thoughts. For those who haven't had a chance yet, you can do so through our website [here](#).

as early as Monday. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is expected to deliver its cost estimates tomorrow or early next week, which will then allow Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to finalize the bill.

Debate of the Senate bill will take longer than House debate did, as a number of procedural steps must be overcome before a final bill is voted on. To bring the bill to the floor, the Senate must first vote on a "motion to proceed," which will require 60 votes to override a potential filibuster. The debate over the bill itself and any potential amendments would then begin. Expected topics of debate include the public option, cost containment, immigration, and abortion. Following the floor debate, the bill will require 60 votes to end a likely filibuster, followed by 50 votes to pass the bill through the Senate.

The number of votes on key issues remain in question, as several Democratic senators including Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), Senator Ben Nelson (D-FL) and Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) are uncommitted about how they will vote and independent Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut has stated that he will join a filibuster to block any bill that includes a public insurance option.

Despite these challenges, leaders in the Senate and House reiterated their commitment, this week, to trying to pass a bill for the President to sign by the end of the year.

Additional Reading: [The Hill](#).

Thank you to all of you who emailed us to let us know what you've been up to. Your e-mails provide the content for the "Physicians Making a Difference" section.

Thank you, also, for your feedback. Remember, you can share this newsletter via [facebook](#), [twitter](#), or [linkedIn](#). You can also download this newsletter as a [PDF](#) or listen to it via [iTunes](#).

Sincerely,

Milan de Vries and the Doctors for America Team