



## President Obama Publishes His Health Care Plan ... Sort of

In an effort to drag health care reform back onto the legislative stage, on February 22 President Barack Obama released a blueprint of his version of a comprehensive overhaul of the American health care system. The announcement was designed to set the scene for the pantomime show set for Thursday when C-SPAN will televise a confab between Obama and Republicans in Congress.



While most of the President's proposals mirror those already passed by the Senate on Christmas Eve, there are a few key alterations. What the plan is missing are details. According the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the President's outline is too vague to be precisely evaluated. The CBO is a nonpartisan outfit charged with providing analysis of the cost of legislation. The Office isn't able to effectively calculate the cost of the President's plan, however, because according to information posted on the [CBO Director's blog](#): "Although the proposal reflects many elements that were included in the health care bills passed by the House and the Senate last year, it modifies many of those elements and also includes new ones. Moreover, preparing a cost estimate requires very detailed specifications of numerous provisions, and the materials that were released this morning do not provide sufficient detail on all of the provisions."

Given that the President has scheduled a televised "town hall meeting" with Republican lawmakers for Thursday, even if the President's plan were more specific, the CBO claims that, "analyzing the proposal would be a time-consuming process that could not be completed this week." It is probably a good thing the President has only provided the flimsiest of sketches in advance of Thursday's performance. If he were more forthcoming, the GOP might make more of a show of opposition and that would never do.

Although the CBO claims it is unable to estimate a cost of the President's plan, the White House [announced a price tag of \\$950 billion](#) over a decade. This puts the price of the President's proposal just above the Senate's version and just below the measure passed by the House in November 2009. These exorbitant costs will be offset, the White House insists, by a \$100 billion deficit reduction over the same time period.

One particular change the President is crowing about is the elimination of the deal cut with Senator Ben Nelson of Nebraska. As you may recall, in order to garner Nelson's support for the Democratic leadership's bill and thus secure the filibuster proof supermajority, Senate Majority Leader, Harry Reid (D-Nev.), exempted Nebraska from paying the state's share of Medicaid payments for new enrollees. Under the plan offered by the President, the handout isn't taken away from Nebraska, rather it is spread around to all fifty states by "uniform 100% Federal support for all States for newly eligible individuals from 2014 through 2017...." That is to say, under the Obama Administration's proposal, state borders are obliterated under a green tidal wave of new federal subsidies.

Another part of the President's plan that is equally dismissive of state sovereignty is its mandate that all Americans purchase a qualifying health insurance policy by 2014 or face penalties. Such a demand violates many state legislators' understanding of the Tenth Amendment, however, as lawmakers in 30



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states have submitted bills in their respective state assemblies declaring such federal demands illegal and explicitly refusing to accede to the unprecedented federal encroachment into the sovereignty of the several states that is expressly protected by the Constitution. Basically, the legislatures in those states have questioned where in the Constitution is the federal government empowered to force citizens to enter into contract with private companies for the payment of their health care costs? There is no such provision and the proponents of any of the various national health care schemes refuse to address this critical point.

Among all the diaphanous provisions of the President's plan to nationalize the health care industry, there are a few clauses that are all too clear. The text of the plan does not include the so-called Stupak Amendment that would prohibit federal funding of abortion under any government-provided health insurance policy. When asked at a press conference about the President's stance on the abortion issue in his proposal, White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs answered that while the President does not support federal funding of abortion, he doesn't want to impinge upon a woman's right to choose, either. This is the same "have your cake and eat it, too" rhetoric repeated by the White House when questioned last year about its position on the legislation then being hammered out by the Senate.

Finally, President Obama has demonstrated his political and parliamentary savvy by fashioning his proposal in such a way that it reflects almost entirely the bill already passed by the Senate. By crafting his project in such a manner, the President intends to propel the package through Congress via the procedure known as "budget reconciliation." Using this tactic, advocates of the scheme can obviate the risk of a Republican filibuster, as mere reconciliation measures require only a simple majority vote for passage. "The president expects and believes the American people deserve an up or down vote on health reform," explained Dan Pfeiffer, the President's communication director.

Regardless of the outcome of events of Thursday's televised dog and pony show or the Congressional shadow boxing that will follow, in November President Obama will get his way and the American people will have an up or down vote on health reform and on the overall direction taken by Congress and the White House. The glorious Constitution that created the Congress also affords citizens the sacred right of suffrage and later this year we can forcefully express our displeasure by electing men and women who demonstrate unwavering dedication to the principles of liberty and limited government as set forth in the Constitution.

Beware, however, for regardless of the Constitution's checks, balances, and separation of specifically enumerated powers, as [chronicled in \*The New American\*](#), President Obama is determined to enact his vision of social justice by hook or by crook and there is ample evidence that if by some miracle Congress refuses to acquiesce to the White House's plan to nationalize health care, President Obama will use a signing statement or an executive order to accomplish his goals notwithstanding the objections of the American people or their elected representatives in the state houses or on Capitol Hill.

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