



WEEKLY UPDATE ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

February 5, 2010

More suspense. That's the report from Capitol Hill this week as the fate of comprehensive healthcare reform legislation continues to be unclear. There is no shortage of speculation concerning the Democrats' next move, however, and much of what is being said on and off the record is contradictory: while the White House is still publicly pushing Democratic leadership in Congress to "finish the job," the President is also making clear overtures to Republicans to bring them into the fold in developing a final bill.

And while Democratic leadership in the House and Senate continue to negotiate on a compromise that could be adopted via the Senate reconciliation procedure to "fix" the Senate version of the bill to the liking of House Members, they also are readying the first of an anticipated series of discrete, stand-alone reform measures that presumably could garner enough support to pass. As a case in point, on February 5 House Democrats plan to introduce a bill to repeal the antitrust exemption for health insurance companies and medical malpractice insurance companies, a measure that had been part of the House's health care reform bill. The strategy of passing popular bits and pieces of health care reform legislation was one of the Democrats' strategic options that we described in last week's report, and their impending launch of this strategy is perhaps the only concrete development on the health care reform front this week.

Otherwise, there are those who say that comprehensive reform is dead, and those who insist that it's still very much alive. The one thing that is certain is that it is still too soon to tell. So we will continue to keep you posted on the latest developments concerning the fate of the health care reform bills.