

*Tuesday, September 1, 2009*

## This Week in Health Care Reform

Sen. Ted Kennedy, longtime champion of universal health coverage, died last week at age 77. It remains to be seen how his death will affect the debate over health care reform as Democrats continue efforts without his guidance. Sen. Kennedy was involved in nearly every piece of health care legislation that moved through Congress during his eight-term Senate tenure.

### ***Health Reform Activities***

***Obama Pledges Health Care Reform:*** This week, after much infighting over the fate of the public option, President Obama reaffirmed his commitment to health care reform legislation, suggesting that he would be willing to bypass the GOP. As Democrats consider a wide range of strategies for getting a health reform bill passed, other key senators called for the President to move more slowly as concerns over the growing deficit and the economic recession remain.

***Republicans Launch Senior Health Care Bill of Rights:*** On Monday, the Republican National Committee introduced a "seniors' health care bill of rights," which outlines six principles for health care reform. Examples of the principles include protecting Medicare, prohibiting rationing of health care based on age, and making sure the government does not come between seniors and their physicians.

***Democrats Launch National Grassroots Offensive:*** In an effort to show lawmakers that a majority of Americans still support an overhaul of the health care system amidst growing public concern, the Democratic National Committee's grassroots arm launched a national campaign effort Wednesday. The Democratic Organizing for America, in partnership with the organization Health Care for America Now, expects to hold more than 500 events across the country by early September, when lawmakers return to Washington.

***New Divides Emerge in the Senate:*** Aides have indicated that as Senate Finance Committee negotiators work to trim costs of their bill, new divisions are emerging between Republican and Democratic Senators over proposals to reduce the size of insurance tax credits to families and scale-back insurance coverage mandates. The committees, also known as the Gang of Six, rejected imposing deadlines on their efforts to reach bipartisanship legislation and agreed to talk again September 4th.

***\$1.2 Billion Allocated for Electronic Medical Records:*** Last week, Obama Administration officials announced that \$1.2 billion in federal grants will be available for electronic health record systems. This is the first in a wave of funds allocated by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to create record-sharing networks. The grant is part of the \$36 billion originally included within the stimulus legislation to encourage adoption of electronic medical records by hospitals and doctors.

### ***Looking Ahead***

Lawmakers are slated to return to Washington on September 8<sup>th</sup>.

Should you have any questions regarding Health Care Reform, please contact your SML Account Team

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