

Major Health Care Legislation in Congress

Information courtesy of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners

As of Sept. 8, 2009

Senate Finance negotiations

- Member-level Senate Finance Committee negotiations have largely taken a break during the congressional recess, though staff work continues in earnest.
- Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY), one of the Republican negotiators, caused a stir by criticizing elements of the health reform efforts, prompting the White House to claim that he had “walked away from the table.”
- Sen. Chuck Grasley (R-IA), the ranking member on the Finance Committee, also expressed doubts that a bipartisan compromise could be reached before the end of September, given public concern over the cost of reform and growing federal budget deficits.

Town hall meetings

- Raucus town-hall meetings about health care reform caught many members by surprise during the recess and have put a large dent in public support for reform efforts.
- While many critics of reform legislation cited disputed claims about provisions of the bill dealing with end-of-life care, comparative effectiveness research and how a public health insurance plan would operate, many others expressed concerns with the cost of reform, provider supply issues and other provisions of the legislation.

Death of Sen. Kennedy

- The death of Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA), chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, has temporarily deprived Senate Democrats of their 60-seat supermajority needed to overcome filibusters.
- While we expect some reform proponents invoke his passing to appeal to Congress to pass legislation, we do not expect it to change any votes.

Waxman investigations

- Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) has very publicly launched two new investigations of the health insurance industry.
- One inquiry is looking into the industry’s compensation practices and spending on conferences and off-site events.
- The other is looking into what they call “purging” of high cost small business policyholders by increasing premiums because of increased medical claims.