Healthcare Reform Bill Passes, Debate Far From Over

Posted by petehurrey On 03/22/2010

After Sunday's historic vote by Congress, President Obama is poised to do what many other Democrats, including the late Senator Ted Kennedy failed to accomplish: healthcare reform. The protracted and much debated bill was in danger of failure in a down-to-the-wire effort by the Obama administration, ultimately only passing after Michigan Congressman and a group of anti-abortion Democrats announced they would change their vote and pass the bill.

In the end, the House passed the amended Senate Healthcare Reform version of the bill by a narrow, 219 to 212 margin – only three votes more than the minimum number needed to send the bill to President Obama for signature.

The Democratic controlled House managed to pass the bill without a single Republican vote. According to some Democrats, the vote for the bill may have very well ended more than a few Congressional careers. It is clear that the public is still divided on the issue and that the wrangling and debate is far from over.

Ten states have already announced that they will be bringing suit to stop the implementation of the bill as soon as Pres. Obama signs it into law, stating that the bill is unconstitutional and infringes on the rights of citizens and strips away the sovereignty of individual states; a sovereignty that is guaranteed under the constitution and by the very nature of the Republic that is the United States.

A second bill passed by the House late Sunday already amended the legislation by reducing the impact of the bill’s excise tax provision and stripping away some ‘pork’ deals such as the kickback money to Nebraska and other similar pieces of the healthcare reform bill.

Some hail the bill’s passage as the most important legislation since the passage of Medicare and Medicaid. Proponents state that healthcare reform has been a goal for decades. While most agree the bill is not perfect, far from it, it is agreed that at least with its passage, 32 million Americans currently without insurance would have the ability to receive coverage.

Most of the bill’s impact will come to bear in the year 2014 with only minor changes being implemented in the first four years. It was designed that way so that the various ‘exchanges’ required by state and Federal authorities will have time for creation, funding and implementation.

In 2014, states are required to have insurance marketplaces where citizens could shop for various healthcare insurance options. In order to facilitate the requirement for obtaining coverage, the government will offer subsidies, arguably so that everyone can afford coverage. Also, in 2014, employers that do not offer coverage to employees will be subject to fines. And finally, all citizens will be required to obtain healthcare coverage; either through their employer or by individual policy purchases or be subject to a penalty.

According to provisions in the bill, the cost of the reform legislation would come in the form of reduced spending on Medicare, new taxes and a levy on high-priced insurance policies.

The battle over healthcare is far from over. Many Republicans have stated that they plan to campaign heavily for the November elections on a ‘repeal healthcare reform’ platform. In addition to the aforementioned constitutional challenges, other states plan to create ‘exemption’ legislation whereby certain citizens would be exempt from the provisions included in the bill.