

## DEMOCRATS DITCH PLAN TO AVOID DIRECT VOT - MabuhayRadio

Written by Winda Petilla Lagumbay  
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DEMOCRATS DITCH PLAN TO AVOID DIRECT VOTE ON HEALTH CARE March 20, 2010 3:08 p.m. EDT Washington (CNN) -- Democratic leaders have decided to abandon the plan to avoid a direct vote on the Senate health care bill, known as deem and pass. Instead, multiple Democratic sources told CNN that they will have three independent votes -- a vote on the rule, then a vote on the fix package, followed by a vote on the Senate bill. Previously, Democrats did not think they could pass the fixes before the bill. But they have been assured by the Senate parliamentarian that it is possible. The committee was expected to determine whether the House will vote Sunday on a rule that would simply deem the Senate bill -- a sweeping \$875 billion reform plan that cleared the Senate in December -- passed. The House then would've proceeded to a separate vote on another \$65 billion in compromise changes. "You all in the minority continue to say what the American people think," Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Florida, said during a particularly spirited portion of the meeting. "You don't know what all of the American people think. And you certainly don't know what those in my constituency think." If the Senate bill passes the House, Obama will sign it into law. If the package of changes is passed, it will be taken up by the Senate. Freshmen House Republicans railed Saturday against the bill and the possible legislative mechanism Democrats may use to pass it. "We're trying to vote on a bill without voting on a bill," Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer of Missouri said. "While this might not be the first time 'deem and pass' has ever been used in the House, I believe it is the first time that it's being used as an attempt to deceive the American people," said Rep. Lynn Jenkins of Kansas. GOP leaders failed Thursday to force a vote on a resolution requiring the Senate health care bill to be brought to an up-or-down vote. Also Saturday, President Obama plans to address the House Democratic caucus to make a final plea for the health care overhaul. Four Democratic officials familiar with the plans told CNN on Friday that the president will speak Saturday to the lawmakers. The pitch will be made on Capitol Hill, White House aides said. Democratic leaders are trying to round up the 216 necessary votes to pass the bill. According to CNN's latest count, 31 Democrats plan to vote against the legislation. Thirty-eight Democratic "no" votes are needed to kill the bill. Multiple Democratic leadership sources told CNN that Democrats have more than 200 "yes" votes. The president made an urgent public plea for health care reform Friday, slamming private insurers and accusing his plan's opponents of spreading lies and distortions. "In just a few days, a century-long struggle will culminate in a historic vote," Obama declared at a campaign-style event at Virginia's George Mason University. "If you believe that it's right, you've got to help us finish this fight. ... The time for reform is right now." Obama warned that if Congress rejects his plan, "the insurance industry will continue to run amuck." Administration officials claim that the reform plan has been picking up momentum in recent days. They told CNN they had a "really good day" Thursday, when the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that the compromise plan would cost \$940 billion over 10 years while reducing the deficit by \$138 billion -- \$20 billion more than the bill passed by the Senate. The budget office numbers reassured some fiscally conservative Democrats, according to congressional leaders. If enacted, the measure would constitute the biggest expansion of federal health care guarantees since the enactment of Medicare and Medicaid over four decades ago. It would extend insurance coverage to an additional 32 million Americans, according to a preliminary analysis from the budget office. Republicans contend the plan amounts to a government takeover of the private insurance system that will do little to slow spiraling medical costs. They argue it would lead to higher premiums and taxes for middle-class families while resulting in deep Medicare cuts. Among other things, the plan would expand Medicare prescription drug

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coverage, increase federal subsidies to help people buy insurance and ban denials of coverage for pre-existing conditions. It seeks to bridge the gap between previous House and Senate bills partly by watering down and delaying the implementation of a tax on high-end insurance plans. Republicans are fuming over Democrats' decision to use a legislative maneuver called reconciliation, which will allow the compromise measures -- if passed by the House -- to clear the Senate with a simple majority of 51 votes. Senate Democrats lost their filibuster-proof 60-seat supermajority in January with the election of Republican Sen. Scott Brown of Massachusetts. Republicans contend that reconciliation, which is limited to provisions pertaining to the budget, was never meant to facilitate passage of a sweeping reform measure such as the health care bill. Democrats point out that reconciliation was used to pass several major bills in recent years, including George W. Bush's 2001 and 2003 tax cuts. House Democrats have expressed concern that the compromise measures will not be approved by the more conservative Senate. Pelosi said Friday, however, that "when our members go to vote, they will have all the assurances they need" that the Senate will approve the compromise plan. Meanwhile Saturday, a Tea Party protest against the bill was planned in Washington at noon. Ahead of the protest, demonstrators carried signs and chanted. "We want this bill stopped," organizer Jennifer Hulseley said. "This is not what the American people want, and our congressmen and our congresswomen need to listen to the American people because they really mean it this time." [Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)