

## ***Closing the Deal on Health Reform, With or Without the GOP***

**A DailyKos.com Dairy Entry, a My.BarackObama.com Blog Entry,  
An OpEdNews.com Article, and an E-Mail to Progressive Activists**

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Pres. Obama is catching a lot of flak right now from both the Left and the Right, as on his leadership for health care reform.

In particular, some who follow politics closely ask, Isn't the president's reaching out in a spirit of "bipartisanship" now—after a year of virtually lockstep obstruction on the part of the GOP in Congress—an exercise in futility?

Well, independent swing voters are, understandably and rightly, fed up with the lack of progress on legislation so desperately needed to move our nation forward, out of the mess that the previous administration left us in (a fact that most Democrats still recognize but most Republicans simply dismiss out of hand). So politically, calls for bipartisan cooperation should at least "play well in Peoria."

But that is a far cry from actually breaking the legislative logjams—particularly from the filibuster in the Senate—and solving our pressing problems.

And the president's strong, unprecedented, one-on-many—truly gutsy—performance in recently debating the Republican House members may

have actually made them less prone to accept his Super Bowl invitation to sit down with him and discuss, point by point, their plans for health care reform and ours.

Indeed, the GOP House leaders are balking at another encounter of the Obama kind, particularly because [the White House insists](#) it will not scrap the hard work of the House and Senate over these many months and start all over from scratch, perhaps constructing some "[one- or two-legged stool](#)" of a health care plan, which couldn't stand on its own but would simply hand over to the insurance industry a whole horde of new customers without any cost controls or subsidies for people to afford insurance.

Any ideas will be considered in the health care summit; but most Democrats are confident that after public debate, with input from recognized health care experts, any reasonable observers will conclude that the GOP proposals, as we've heard before, will not be better than the (probably-by-then-reconciled) House/Senate plan for making health care insurance more [available, dependable, and affordable \(let alone helping to reduce the federal deficit\)](#).

So if most Democrats anticipate little if any improvement in the plan, what's the point of Obama even asking the GOP to a health care summit?

Again, to those of us who follow politics closely, it's utterly predictable: The Party of No will just say "no" to all the Democrats' proposals, regardless of their merits—what's gone on for the last year, in health care reform and every other major issue.

**But consider this:** *Only one in three Americans knows that not a single Republican senator voted for the health care bill, and only one in four Americans knows that it takes 60 votes—not the Democrats' simple majority—in the Senate to overcome a GOP filibuster and force a vote on a bill.* No wonder so many Americans—and not just the Tea Partiers—are so upset at the Democrats for "not getting anything done," despite the majorities a majority of independents helped give the Democrats in the House and Senate.

The only way to overcome that impression—that the Democrats just haven't done anything to make good on their last campaigns' promises, let alone will deliver on those they're making this next time around—and to rally public opinion, giving "centrist" Dems political cover, is to show the world just how obstructive, how deaf to the pleas of the suffering of everyday Americans, the Republicans in fact are: a fact well known to you and me, my passionately political friends, but apparently not known, or not known well enough, to the American public at large.

And if the Senate Democrats need to pass fixes to their health care bill (to the House and Senate Democrats' liking) or want to pass any other budget-affecting legislation (which should satisfy the requirements of The Byrd Rule) by a simple majority vote, they need not feel squeamish about using budget reconciliation, [just as Republicans used reconciliation to pass several budget-busting Bush tax cuts primarily for the wealthy.](#)

If in the spotlight and on the spot, some Republicans actually do break ranks and work with us, as in a health care summit, fine. But if not, then we can still accomplish more significant work (The benefits of the stimulus bill—such as up to two million jobs created or saved—were vastly underappreciated, masked by all the damage to our economy); and we can do so on our own if need be, without anyone being able to say, honestly and without reproach, that we did not offer to work with them in the light of day.

Ethically, we need not see this strategy as some sort of Machiavellian manipulation of the situation by the president (as our years of dealing with the insidious machinations of Carl Rove and company have hardened us to expect); rather, this spirit of outreach, with respect for the opinions of all, seems to me to be as inherently a part of Pres. Obama's character as his determined hard work for the health care, jobs, and other vital needs of all.

As I was just reminded by watching our down-to-earth First Lady address a ["Let's Move!"](#) gathering, in her campaign against the national

epidemic of childhood obesity, Pres. and Mrs. Obama are—as they were when they turned down much more lucrative jobs (as on Wall Street) to become community organizers —“people persons.” And that’s a value that all of us can be glad and thankful to have in our elected leaders.

[So tell your friends, communities, and legislators](#)

—for health care, jobs, and everything else we need to do—let’s get the job done!