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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:
***Democrats View Bipartisanship on Health Care Reform
as a ‘Hostile Act’***

“They said, ‘Republicans are having this meeting and you need to let all of your clients know if they have someone there, that will be viewed as a **hostile act**,’” said a Democratic lobbyist who attended the meeting. - [Roll Call June 11, 2009](#)

“Your health and the health of your family is far more important than some partisan turf war in Washington. Let’s hope the Democrats realize this and agree to be more open and honest before it’s too late.” - *Congressman Bill Shuster*

Washington, D.C. – **Congressman Bill Shuster** released the following statement after learning in the newspaper Roll Call that Senate Democrats are threatening interest groups involved in the health care industry not to speak with Republicans or face retaliation. A copy of the Roll Call article follows this release.

“It is outrageous that Democrats would try to smother debate on a critically important issue as health care reform,” Shuster said. “What the Democrats are proposing is the creation of a massive government run health care system that will impact everyone’s life and the very future of our nation. If there was ever an issue that demanded an open and thoughtful public debate, it’s this.”

There is no question that we need to address the problems in our current health care system, but that does not have to come at the expense of private insurance and the free market. Congressman Shuster rejects the Democrats’ insistence that the federal bureaucracy should take over and run America’s health care system. The American Medical Association and other health care and patient groups share Shuster’s view.

“A government takeover of health care is a dangerous proposition because it eliminates patient choice and forces the rationing of medical care,” Shuster said. “Patients should consult with their doctors, not bureaucrats and bean counters in Washington when

deciding what care is best for them. For the families I represent, the Democrats' plan means higher costs, lower quality of care and fewer choices for patients."

In addition to the rationing of medical care, the Democrats' proposal would also punish the private sector and small businesses by imposing new taxes to pay into the government health care system. The Washington Post recently reported that the employee mandate could cost \$300 billion over 10 years through surcharges to businesses resulting in the loss of 4.7 million jobs.

"So not only will the Democrats' plan ration care and inject the inefficiency of government into your most personal medical decisions, it could cost you your job as well," Shuster added.

"The dangers of the plan congressional Democrats are pushing need to be discussed. The enormity of what they are proposing should be enough for the American people to demand an open debate," Shuster said.

"Your health and the health of your family is far more important than some partisan turf war in Washington. Let's hope the Democrats realize this and agree to be more open and honest before it's too late."

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Baucus Aides Warn K Street

June 11, 2009

By David M. Drucker, Anna Palmer and Kate Ackley

Roll Call Staff

Top aides to Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) called a last-minute, pre-emptive strike on Wednesday with a group of prominent Democratic lobbyists, warning them to advise their clients not to attend a meeting with Senate Republicans set for Thursday.

Russell Sullivan, the top staffer on Finance, and Jon Selib, Baucus' chief of staff, met with a bloc of more than 20 contract lobbyists, including several former Baucus aides.

"They said, 'Republicans are having this meeting and you need to let all of your clients know if they have someone there, that will be viewed as a hostile act,'" said a Democratic lobbyist who attended the meeting.

"Going to the Republican meeting will say, 'I'm interested in working with Republicans to stop health care reform,'" the lobbyist added.

Republican leaders have been meeting with health care stakeholders for months, with those sessions occurring “more frequently than once a month,” according to a senior Senate aide. The stated purpose of Thursday’s meeting, organized by Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), is to discuss proposals for how to pay for health care reform.

But the underlying motivation for the get-together is to encourage health care lobbyists and stakeholders concerned about the Democrats’ health care reform plans to speak out publicly.

“They need to speak up,” one Senate Republican leadership aide said. “They need to help us help them.”

Thune said Democrats are using threats and intimidation to keep unhappy stakeholders silent.

“If you don’t engage on this thing, this train’s leaving the station,” Thune said. “If you want [Republicans] to have more influence, you’ve got to engage.”

One longtime health care lobbyist agreed that the GOP frustration is spilling out of the Capitol and onto K Street.

“It is notable that Republicans are really finding their voice, and their level of frustration is building with the stakeholders’ inability or refusal to speak out,” this lobbyist said. “They’re getting frustrated. Republicans are doing it themselves.”

One senior Democratic source charged that Thune’s meeting and the supposed motives behind it are in fact a smoke screen for killing health care reform altogether. “While Democrats and many Republicans are working collaboratively to reform health care, a small group of Republicans appear all too eager to derail this promising, bipartisan effort,” this source said. “It’s politics as usual, it’s disheartening and it’s a shame.”

Senate Republicans are opposed to plans by President Barack Obama and Congressional Democrats to implement a government-run, public plan option as a part of health care reform. They also are concerned with how Democrats plan to pay for reform.

Recognizing they don’t have the votes to stop legislation on their own, Republicans are pushing their natural allies in the business community to help bring public pressure to bear as another way to influence the outcome.

Obama has set Oct. 15 as the deadline for approval of health care reform, and Democratic leaders in Congress are rushing to clear bills from their respective chambers by the end of July.

“Our effort has been to get these folks to speak their mind,” one senior Senate Republican aide said.

After months of holding their tongues while inclusive, bipartisan negotiations continued in the Senate Finance and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committees, the business community has now considered speaking out, given their displeasure with the HELP panel's reform bill, which was made public on Tuesday.

But with Baucus' office still warning dissenters that anyone who makes their opposition public could be permanently excluded from future negotiations, the groups representing businesses, health care providers, hospitals and similar stakeholders are still wavering on whether to voice their concerns publicly.

The lineup of lobbyists who attended the Wednesday session included a cast of Democratic insiders similar to that at previous meetings convened by Baucus' staff. The participants included: Jeff Forbes, a former Baucus chief of staff who lobbies at Cauthen Forbes & Williams; Jonathon Jones, a partner with Peck, Madigan, Jones & Stewart; Tarplin Strategies' Rich Tarplin, an assistant secretary at Health and Human Services in the Clinton administration; another former Baucus top aide, David Castagnetti, of Mehlman Vogel Castagnetti and OB-C Group founder Larry O'Brien.

Democratic sources noted Wednesday that Baucus is courting Republican support and remains committed to treating all stakeholders fairly.

On Wednesday, he met with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) in the Capitol, part of a marathon day of bipartisan meetings that included a session with his GOP colleagues at the White House and discussions with Republican members of the Finance Committee.

"Chairman Baucus wants to continue to keep health care stakeholders informed of the progress on health reform," said the Senator's Finance Committee spokesman, Scott Mulhauser. "This is a lengthy, transformative process, and meetings like these are an essential part of the ongoing, bipartisan effort to continue to keep everyone at the table working together."

One lobbyist who attended the Wednesday meeting with Baucus' staff said that the message was more bipartisan. "They said they anticipate having a bipartisan bill and that the process is going well with Republicans," this lobbyist said. But, the lobbyist added, Baucus' team did warn, "If your clients attack the process or the product, it's going to be hard to work with you."

As for Baucus, he told reporters earlier this week that he was not aware of health care stakeholders being threatened by his staff to play ball with the Finance Committee-led negotiations or risk being blackballed from the process.

"I'm sure they can all say what they want to say," Baucus said, referring to GOP accusations that health care lobbyists have been subject to intimidations and threats. "It's news to me. I don't think so. I don't know of any."

Republican lobbyists said they have not felt any threats from their party.

“For a while, Republicans have cautioned industry to be careful about getting in bed with the administration or Kennedy or Baucus too early,” said Janet Grissom, a lobbyist at Peck, Madigan, Jones & Stewart, who was once a top aide to McConnell.

“Having said that, they recognize if you’re in business you can’t ignore the decision-makers out there. While they are unhappy and think that a lot of the health care sector is being naive in thinking they can work together, they recognize that’s how this town works.”

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