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## **Senate Poised to Begin Health Reform Debate**

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Senate leaders have indicated that they expect to bring their health reform bill to the Senate floor next week, but they also signaled that the first crucial vote on a motion to proceed to consideration of the bill may not occur until after Thanksgiving.

Public release of the Senate bill has been delayed pending the arrival of CBO cost estimates that have been requested on key legislative provisions by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV). The CBO scores will be completed shortly, but they may not be publicly released. After reviewing the scores, Leader Reid will make final decisions about key elements of the bill that will serve as the starting point for the Senate floor debate. After the legislative language is finalized and released, the Senate will begin a debate that is expected to last at least three to four weeks and include consideration of dozens, if not hundreds, of amendments.

The Senate was in session just two days this week (Monday and Tuesday) and the House was in recess the entire week. Both chambers will be in session during the week of November 16, before going into recess again during the week of Thanksgiving. Following this break, Senate leaders will push hard to complete action on its health reform bill before Christmas.

## **House Approves Health Reform By Narrow Margin**

On November 7, by a vote of 220 to 215, the House approved H.R. 3962, the "Affordable Health Care for America Act of 2009."

The House vote on passage of this bill was preceded by approximately seven hours of floor debate. In the early morning hours of November 7, the House Rules Committee adopted a resolution setting the parameters for the House floor debate. This resolution allowed for votes on two amendments and one motion:

- By a vote of 240 to 194, the House approved an amendment by Reps. Bart Stupak (D-MI) and Joseph Pitts (R-PA) addressing coverage of abortion services. This amendment would prohibit federal funds from being used to pay for abortion services under the government-run plan, and it would prohibit the affordability credits from being used to pay for plans that cover



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- abortion services. Individuals would be permitted to use their own funds to purchase supplemental coverage for abortion services.
- By a vote of 258 to 176, the House defeated the Republican substitute amendment, which included provisions addressing the following topics: federal funding for state high risk pools and reinsurance programs to cover persons with pre-existing conditions; a nationwide marketplace for individual health insurance; improvements to HSAs; association health plans; independent review and new restrictions on health plan rescissions; administrative simplifications; medical liability reforms; FDA approval of generic biologics; and repeal of the Federal Coordinating Council for Comparative Effectiveness Research.
  - By a vote of 247 to 187, the House defeated a motion to recommit the bill to the committees of jurisdiction with instructions to amend the bill to include medical liability reforms and to protect seniors from Medicare Advantage funding cuts. This motion was offered by House Republican Whip Eric Cantor (R-VA).

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