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## **Negotiations Intensify as Pressure Builds for Final Health Reform Bill**

*AHIP, Washington Update, 1/15/2010*

Democratic congressional leaders and committee chairmen have been participating in lengthy White House meetings this week, involving President Obama and high-level Administration officials, in an effort to reach agreement on a final health reform bill.

Negotiators are focused on producing a final bill that could be signed into law by the President before he delivers his State of the Union address in early February. This timeframe anticipates that the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) would need one week to score the final legislative language, thus setting up a final House vote possibly as early as next weekend, and a final Senate vote approximately four days later.

The current negotiations include a significant focus on issues surrounding the proposed health insurance exchanges and the Medicare commission. Although media sources are reporting details about tentative agreements on some issues, including the high-value health plan tax, the negotiators are not publicly commenting on the decisions they are making. Yesterday's negotiating session extended well past midnight, and additional meetings will take place over the weekend as Congress and the Administration intensify their efforts to produce a final bill as quickly as possible.

In addition to participating in the health reform negotiations, President Obama addressed the House Democratic Caucus yesterday at their annual issues retreat. While acknowledging that some Democratic lawmakers are facing criticism for their votes on health reform, the President told them that he will be "waging a great campaign from one end of the country to the other, telling Americans with insurance or without what they stand to gain."

In addition to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), lawmakers participating in the White House meetings include House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD), House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-SC), House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman (D-CA), House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charlie Rangel (D-NY), House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA), Assistant Senate



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Majority Leader Richard Durbin (D-IL), Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT), Senate HELP Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IL), and Senate Banking Committee Chairman Christopher Dodd (D-CT).

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