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## **President Obama Calls for Health Insurance Reform to Ease Burden on Middle Class**

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On January 27, President Obama delivered his State of the Union address before a joint session of Congress, placing a strong emphasis on job creation, economic issues, and the concerns of middle class families.

The President stated that “jobs must be our number one focus in 2010.” He also emphasized his support for health insurance reform, financial regulatory reform, energy and climate legislation, a national export initiative, investments in education, and deficit reduction. The President urged Democrats and Republicans to work together on these issues, stating that he remains committed to “changing the tone of our politics” and would like to begin meeting on a monthly basis with congressional leaders from both parties.

On the topic of health reform, the President stressed that legislation is needed to ease the burden on middle class families, and he encouraged everyone to “take another look at the plan we’ve proposed.” The President added: “But if anyone from either party has a better approach that will bring down premiums, bring down the deficit, cover the uninsured, strengthen Medicare for seniors, and stop insurance company abuses, let me know.”

The President concluded his comments on health reform by urging Congress: “Do not walk away from reform. Not now. Not when we are so close. Let us find a way to come together and finish the job for the American people.”

## **Discussions Continue on Comprehensive Health Reform as House Prepares to Act on Narrowly Focused Bills**

Congressional leaders are considering options for moving forward with health reform legislation following President Obama’s State of the Union address this week in which he urged lawmakers to “come together and finish the job.”

While there is no clear consensus at this time, there has been considerable discussion this week about a scenario under which the House would vote on the Senate-passed health reform bill (H.R. 3590), while a package of modifications to



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the Senate bill – sometimes referred to as a “sidecar” – would be passed by both chambers using budget reconciliation procedures.

Meanwhile, House leaders are planning to schedule floor votes – possibly as early as next week – on a number of narrowly focused health bills, some of which may be structured with the goal of attracting Republican support. Consideration of these bills is not intended to preclude action on comprehensive health reform at a later date. As of this writing, it appears that one of the first bills to move to the House floor could be an antitrust bill that would repeal portions of the McCarran-Ferguson Act pertaining to health insurance issuers and medical malpractice issuers.

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