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## **Congress Poised to Enter Final Crucial Stage of Health Reform Debate**

*AHIP, Washington Update, 1/8/2010*

President Obama met this week on Wednesday and Thursday with Democratic congressional leaders and committee chairmen to discuss their plans for producing a final health reform bill early this year. At this stage of the legislative process, lawmakers are focused on resolving the differences between the separate health reform bills that were approved by the House on November 7 and by the Senate on December 24.

While congressional leaders have not publicly confirmed this, it is widely expected that – instead of appointing a conference committee – they will informally negotiate a final substitute amendment that would then be presented to both the House and the Senate for final votes. This strategy, sometimes referred to as the “ping pong” approach, would limit opportunities for the bill’s opponents to delay the legislative process.

Because Congress is not in session at this time and many lawmakers are spending time in their states and districts, most negotiations over the health reform legislation currently are taking place at the staff level. After the House convenes next week and the Senate returns the following week, members will become more actively engaged in making decisions about the final bill.

## **House Set to Convene Next Week; Senate Will Return January 20**

While health reform legislation continues to be the focus of intense discussions off the House and Senate floors, legislative business is scheduled to officially begin on January 12 in the House and January 20 in the Senate.

The House will be in session two days next week, Tuesday and Wednesday. Later in the week, House Democrats are scheduled to hold their annual issues conference to discuss their agenda for the 2010 session. When the Senate convenes on January 20, the first order of business will be legislation to increase the national debt ceiling. Legislation addressing job creation will be another high priority in the early weeks of the 2010 session.



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President Obama will deliver his State of the Union address before a joint session of Congress in late January or early February. The Administration is expected to submit its annual budget proposals to Congress in February.

The American Senior Benefits Association (ASBA) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit association where membership is completely free. ASBA is committed to lifestyle enhancement through benefits, advocacy and education for the over-50 population. ASBA concentrates its efforts on the issues that are of greatest concern to its members. Through its partners and programs, ASBA members receive product and service discounts, as well as other benefits. Current ASBA membership stands at over 500,000 nationally.