



## What's ahead for Washington this week

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Washington, Dec. 6 – After President Obama's healthcare pep rally in a closed-door session with Senate Democrats Sunday afternoon, Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE) commented that he remains undecided on his vote because "so many different ideas" are still being considered. But Nelson said he remains determined to introduce an amendment this week to limit abortion coverage under the legislation to cases of rape, incest or where the mother's is at risk.

With Nelson's and other wavering Democrats' votes needed to get a filibuster-proof 60 vote majority, the Senate healthcare debate will continue this week – and continue to be highly partisan. Key votes are expected on Nelson's abortion amendment and various options to increase health insurance competition without adding more government bureaucracy. One possibility is to have a new public option run not by the Department of Health & Human Services but instead by the Office of Personnel Management – because OPM already runs the highly regarded Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. That would provide an option many people have called for: giving ordinary citizens the same health insurance choices that members of Congress enjoy. So expect Republican Senators to continue to charge that the Democrats' healthcare legislation would trigger a "government takeover" – and expect Democrats to respond that it would be hypocrisy for Republican Senators to continue accepting OPM-run healthcare for themselves but deny this same program to their constituents.

Healthcare will dominate the agenda. But there's lots more going on. Agriculture Secretary Vilsack and the rest of the "Green Cabinet" will be in Copenhagen for the global climate change negotiations Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> – an important time for the Cabinet members who will have the task of helping ensure that President Obama can take part in a triumphant final day of the conference on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Obama himself has plenty on his agenda. Afghanistan remains a major issue for him, as shown by his meeting Monday with the U.S. Commander there, General Stanley McChrystal, and with the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry. On Tuesday, the President will focus on the U.S. economy and the jobs situation in a major speech at the Brookings Institution. Then on Wednesday, Obama heads for Norway where he will receive the Nobel Peace Prize on Thursday.

The Senate and House will have plenty to do besides healthcare, including:

Tuesday, Dec. 08, 2009

- Senate Environment & Public Works, oversight hearing on federal drinking water programs.
- Senate Energy & Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy, hearings a variety of green energy issues including H.R.957 to authorize higher education curriculum development and graduate training in advanced energy and green building technologies, H.R.2729 to authorize National Environmental Research Parks, H.R.3165 to provide for wind energy research and demonstration, H.R.3246 to provide for new vehicle technology research and application, H.R.3585 to guide and provide for research and demonstration of solar energy technologies, S.737 to provide for research and demonstration to make biofuels more compatible with small engines, S.1617 to provide grants to states for improving energy efficiency and clean energy technology, S.2744 to provide technology prizes including a financial award for carbon dioxide separation, and S.2773 to support research and demonstration of commercial offshore wind energy.

Wednesday, Dec. 09, 2009

- House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy, & Research hearing to review the regulatory and legislative strategies in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.
- House Financial Services Subcommittee on Capital Markets, Insurance, & Government Sponsored Enterprises hearing on Additional Reforms to the Securities Investor Protection Act.

Thursday, Dec. 10, 2009

- House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Energy & the Environment, hearing on Drinking Water and Public Health Impacts of Coal Combustion Waste Disposal.
- Senate Energy & Natural Resources hearings to examine the role of grid-scale energy storage in meeting energy and climate goals.

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