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## **In Case You Missed It Don't Bend the Rules Just To Pass Any Bill**

*Abq. Journal: If the Senate health care bill is such a good plan, why are President Obama, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid resorting to arcane, secretive — and seemingly desperate — tactics to ram it through Congress?*

Albuquerque, NM— As today's *Albuquerque Journal* editorial pointed out, 68% of Americans don't think the government-run healthcare program being considered in Congress is the right plan. Instead of taking this into consideration, Reps. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan are charging full steam ahead—even if it means getting creative with the rules so that House members wouldn't be forced to vote on the Senate's version of healthcare legislation.

As Heinrich's GOP challenger Jon Barela noted in a separate *Journal* article published today, "Reps. Cautious on Pelosi Strategy," all legislators should be willing to let the American people know where they stand on the bill. "If it's a good bill and if it's right for the American people, they should vote for it. If it's not, they should admit that there is a better, less costly way and get the bill right."

Meanwhile, Harry Teague, who is behind in the polls in his reelection bid against former Congressman Steve Pearce, refuses to let his constituents know whether he opposes or supports the Senate bill. Teague is precisely the kind of Democrat Nancy Pelosi is looking to shield from a vote.

As former Congressman Steve Pearce noted in the *Journal*, Pelosi is trying to "politically protect lawmakers who are reluctant to publicly support the measure. That's what we sent them there for—to make decisions and tough votes."

Read "Reps. Cautious on Pelosi Strategy," online at:  
<http://www.abqjournal.com/news/washington/172315452934newswashington03-17-10.htm>

Today's *Albuquerque Journal* Editorial is printed below in its entirety.

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## **Don't Bend the Rules Just To Pass Any Bill**

**Albuquerque Journal Editorial**

Read this online at: <http://www.abqjournal.com/opinion/editorials/17223178589opinioneditorials03-17-10.htm>

If the Senate health care bill is such a good plan, why are President Obama, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid resorting to arcane, secretive — and seemingly desperate — tactics to ram it through Congress?

Perhaps it's because 68 percent of Americans don't think it is the right plan. Even many people who want changes in health care and better insurance protections for consumers don't think the trillion dollar measure that includes a massive expansion of Medicaid — a government welfare program — is the way to go.

Merits aside, this week's news is about the scramble by Democrats to get the legislation passed now that they have lost their supermajority in the Senate with Scott Brown's election in Massachusetts. Before that, the two chambers would have had a conference committee to hammer out differences between their respective bills. That compromise measure would have gone back to a vote in both the House and Senate — a plan that no longer works because Republicans could filibuster.

The new strategy calls for using a process in which the House approves the Senate bill and then both chambers make the overall outcome palatable to House Democrats through a series of fixes approved in a reconciliation process that takes just a simple majority but usually is reserved for budget matters.

While Obama has insisted that Americans deserve an up and down vote — code for saying it's OK to use reconciliation to avoid the filibuster — Pelosi and Co. are talking about using a tactic to skirt a meaningful up or down vote in the House, a move they think will provide political cover for Democrats.

This "deem and pass" procedure would allow House members to vote on a package of fixes to the Senate bill, but not actually vote on the bill itself. The bill would then be "deemed" to have been passed.

No roll call. No ayes or nays. No explaining to do back home.

Madam Speaker thinks it's a great idea. "It's more insider and process-oriented than most people want to know," she said Monday. "But I like it because people don't have to vote on the Senate bill."

Indeed. It's more likely that she doesn't think she can muster enough votes to pass the

Senate bill.

And there are new questions about whether the Senate will really dump some of the unsavory deals cut by Majority Leader Harry Reid to get the legislation passed last year. Obama had called for the sweet home state deals to be jettisoned, but his administration started backpedaling on that this week. Apparently anything is fair game when you just want to get the deed done.

So what happens if the people's representatives in Washington actually do this? Insurance premiums for working people and costs for businesses are likely to go up to pay for coverage for those who lack insurance or jobs that provide it. The Senate plan essentially raids Medicare, when that program itself needs propping up, to fund Medicaid.

The irony in New Mexico is that Medicaid offers better coverage than many of the plans available to working people who pay for private insurance.

While well-intentioned, many feel this health plan doesn't cut costs, it increases them. It doesn't adequately address fraud and waste. It doesn't allow insurance to be sold across state lines to promote competition that could lower premiums. It doesn't address defensive medicine that results in unnecessary tests and treatments that drive up cost.

With the exception of Rep. Harry Teague of Hobbs, New Mexico's delegation is generally supportive of the legislation. Teague voted "no" the first time around and says he is undecided.

That's their call and they can make their case to voters.

But the "end justifies the means" philosophy by congressional leadership determined to deliver a health plan to Obama — even one that doesn't meet his earlier goals of containing costs and is larded with special deals — is shameful.

Doing it without a roll call vote is obscene.

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