

This Week in Health Reform: September 4

In an effort to regain control of the health care reform debate, after a very contentious August recess and a significant drop in the President's poll numbers, President Obama announced plans to [address a joint session of Congress](#) on Wednesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>. In his remarks, President Obama plans to clearly outline a specific blueprint for the health care reform legislation he expects Congress to pass.

### **Senate Negotiations:**

***Grassley: Public Option is Off the Table:*** On Monday, Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA), the GOP's top health reform negotiator, indicated that [a public option is off the table](#) and not something being discussed by the core group of Senator negotiators, also known as the "Gang of Six." The group is slated to reconvene talks on Friday via conference call but do not expect to make any real decisions until lawmakers return to Washington.

***Baucus Predicts Health Reform will Happen This Year:*** In an interview on Monday, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) firmly stated that a [health care overhaul will happen this year](#) with or without GOP support. Baucus expects to know by mid-September if a bipartisan deal can be worked out.

***Enzi's Opposition Puts a Snag in Hopes for Bipartisan Deal:*** GOP Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), a core member of the Senate's Gang of Six, [sharply criticized](#) the Democrats' reform plan in the GOP's weekly radio address on Saturday, strongly indicating that a bipartisan deal will be increasingly more difficult to achieve. Enzi stated that the proposed legislation "will actually make our nation's finances sicker without saving you money." On Thursday, Enzi reiterated his commitment to working to achieve bipartisan agreement by working with the Gang of Six.

### **Additional Activities:**

***Democrats and Republicans Push Reform on the Road:*** Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle hit the road this week, hosting campaign-style events across the country in a last ditch effort to promote their messages before returning to Washington. A group of GOP Senators including Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-TN) and Sens. John McCain (R-AZ), Kit Bond (R-MO), Mel Martinez (R-FL) and Richard Burr (R-NC) hosted events where they emphasized the importance of a [go-slow approach](#) to President Obama's health care reform push. Meanwhile, the Democratic National Committee's Organizing for America continued its aggressive grassroots initiative, which included an [11-city bus tour](#) advocating Obama's health reform messages.

***CBO Prevention Projections Questioned:*** A Health Affairs [study](#) this week highlighted the shortcomings of the Congressional Budget Office's scoring of prevention programs. Arguing that true savings can not be found within a 10 year-window, the study suggests a more accurate measure of prevention cost savings, which would take place over the course of 25 years.

**Looking Ahead:**

President Obama will [travel to Cincinnati on Monday](#) to speak to the AFL-CIO annual Labor Day picnic.

Lawmakers are scheduled to return to Washington on September 8<sup>th</sup> and both the House and Senate will gather for President Obama's [joint session](#) on September 9<sup>th</sup>.