

This Week in Health Reform: August 13

With lawmakers officially back in their districts, the health reform debate has done anything but slow down. Rather, it has taken new shape in the form of town hall meetings convened by members of Congress across the country. Many of these meetings have been filled with loud outbursts, heated debates and hot tempers, largely from opponents of reform proposals. In addition, the partisan [battle](#) around messaging continues to wage on.

Health Reform Activities:

President Obama Holds Town Hall Meetings: President Obama addressed a Portsmouth, NH crowd of 1,800 on Tuesday at his [first](#) town hall meeting where he sought to reassure the public about health care reform. Compared to other town hall meetings, the crowd was [less contentious](#). However, as Obama spoke, approximately 2,000 demonstrators from both sides of the debate lined up outside the facility. President Obama spent much of the forum debunking [misconceptions](#) around the reform proposals to those who see their coverage jeopardized.

[President Obama](#) will hold two more town hall meetings this week: one in Bozeman, MT on Friday and another on Saturday in Grand Junction, CO.

Pelosi and Hoyer Criticize Protesters as ‘Un-American’: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer co-signed an editorial in [USA Today](#) on Monday that called the ongoing town hall protests ‘un-American.’ President Obama sought to [distance himself](#) from these comments.

Hot Tempers Continue at Town Hall Meetings: Because of the growing number of [protests](#), some legislators increased security at the town hall meetings this week, while others opted for [teleconferences](#). In an effort to prepare lawmakers for the protests, House Democrat leaders set up a ‘war room’ to answer lawmakers’ policy questions and help prepare them for potential disruptions. Additionally, Organizing for America, President Obama’s campaign arm, launched a campaign called “[Office Visits for Health Reform](#)” asking supporters of Obama’s health initiative to visit their lawmakers’ offices.

President Obama Confronts Health Care ‘Rumors’: Beginning with President Obama’s weekly radio and Internet address on Saturday, White House officials have been working to dispel public misperceptions about health care reform. [Said](#) the President “Let me start by dispelling the outlandish rumors that reform will promote euthanasia, or cut Medicaid, or bring about a government take over of health care. That’s simply not true.”

To aggressively respond to rumors, White House officials on Monday launched a Web site called “[Reality Check.](#)” The Web site is equipped with viral tools for consumers to spread the information provided.

Opinion Polls:

Public Polls Show Division: Analysis of a July [USA TODAY/Gallup Poll](#) indicates that Americans are divided about health care reform but not necessarily by party lines. Divisions exist as to what the key goal of a health care overhaul should be and what its corresponding time frame should look like. Polls also indicate that seniors are the most resistant to reform. Fewer than half of those [seniors](#) polled want reform enacted this year.

Advertising Activities:

New Coalition Gives Obama \$12M Air Cover on Health Reform: A new coalition called [Americans for Stable Quality Care](#) launched a \$12 million television ad campaign Thursday to support President Obama's health reform plan. The new group, which is likely to be the largest spender in support of health reform, is primarily funded by the pharmaceutical industry, but it includes the American Medical Association, FamiliesUSA, the Federation of American Hospitals, PhRMA and SEIU. The goal of the campaign is to counter the aggression coming out of the town hall meetings and solidify support from swing senators and Blue Dog Democrats.

Financing the Plans:

Congressional Budget Office (CBO) - Cost of Preventative Care Outweighs Savings: The [CBO](#) announced Friday that even though public health may well improve with expanding preventive medical services, including cancer screenings, cholesterol management, vaccinations and wellness training, the costs of such expansions will offset any savings ultimately generated.

Looking Ahead:

Heated and emotional debates are likely to continue throughout the month as President Obama and legislators continue to hold town hall meetings across the country. Lawmakers are slated to return to Washington September 8th.