



For Immediate Release  
Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2009

Time Magazine Columnist Cites Grassley Requirement of Congress as “Favorite”  
in Senate Health Care bill

WASHINGTON – A well-known columnist for Time magazine says his favorite provision in the Senate health reform bill is Senator Chuck Grassley’s requirement that members of Congress and congressional staff access health insurance the same way as many other Americans would be required to access insurance under pending legislation.

In a posting on time.com, Joe Klein lists the Grassley provision first among noteworthy elements in the health reform bill from Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Klein writes:

“There are a couple of aspects of this historic vote that deserve notice here:

1. My favorite provision requires that all members of Congress give up their federally-funded health care benefits and join the health care exchanges that will be set up by this bill. This is brilliant politics, addressing the tide of populist anger and fears of incipient socialism. But it also makes an important substantive point. The future of health care reform in this country will depend on how effectively the exchanges--health insurance super-stores--are working. If members of Congress have to participate in this system, you can bet they'll insist on a array of choices, similar to the system they currently use, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan.”

Grassley presented his proposal in September as an amendment during Finance Committee consideration of a health reform bill. The committee accepted it without objection. The Grassley provision is in the legislation advancing in the Senate.

“My interest in having members of Congress participate in the exchange is consistent with my long-held view that Congress should live under the same laws it passes for the rest of the country,” Grassley said. “The more that Congress experiences the laws it passes, the better.” The Iowa senator is opposed to the overall Senate bill but said if it’s going to become law, members of Congress should be part of it. “It’s a matter of fairness,” he said.

Currently, members of Congress and their staffs participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. The exchange that would be established by the legislation pending in the Senate is modeled after this federal employees' program and is supposed to give participants the same kind of choices and options for health care coverage as federal employees. However, the legislation would cause health insurance premiums to increase for many Americans, according to non-partisan experts. Grassley believes members of Congress should be subject to all of the effects of this legislation, including the same premium increases as many other Americans.

In 1995, President Clinton signed into law the Congressional Accountability Act, which Grassley authored and fought to advance for six years before it was enacted. Grassley's Congressional Accountability Act gives employees of the legislative branch protections under 12 civil rights, labor and workplace safety laws by making those laws apply to Congress. Before enactment of the Congressional Accountability Act, Congress had exempted itself from these laws:

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967  
The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990  
Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964  
The Employee Polygraph Protection Act of 1988  
The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938  
The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993  
The Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute  
Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970  
The Rehabilitation Act of 1973  
Veterans' employment and reemployment rights at Chapter 43 of Title 38 of the U.S. Code  
The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act of 1989.

The Congressional Accountability Act was amended in 1998 to include certain provisions of the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998.

The full Joe Klein post is available here:  
<http://swampland.blogs.time.com/2009/11/22/senate-health-care-vote/#ixzz0XnODP5E9>