

CULTURE OF LIFE HEALTH CARE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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By now the whole world (and several worlds beyond) has heard the news that because of the upset election in Massachusetts yesterday, the Senate Democrats have lost their supermajority. This is indeed extraordinary news, especially for critics of universal health care.

Scott Brown, Republican and outspoken opponent of Congress' health care proposals, roundly defeated liberal Democrat Martha Coakley by a five point margin (52%-47%). A Coakley victory would have retained the 60 vote supermajority that's allowed the Senate to ram through its reform without a stitch of bipartisan support. Now the Democratic caucus has only 59 votes. This means that when the reconciled bill returns to the Senate floor for a final vote, opponents can filibuster and defeat the bill. I expect a sudden bipartisan docility will begin to characterize the Congressional leadership as they scramble to figure a way to pass their behemoth bill.

Healthcare supporters still have one trump card up their sleeves. The Senate leadership could, if they had the stomach, implement a legislative procedure known as *Reconciliation*, which would allow the majority to circumvent the threat of filibuster. The power was originally given to the majority party to allow contentious *budget* bills to be considered and passed without the threat of filibuster. In this case, it would be used to pass with a simple majority a radioactive piece of legislation that's opposed by a supermajority of Americans. I doubt its architects will go that far. Liberals are brazen, but also governed by self-interest. If Senator Reid implements *Reconciliation* to force his bill through, the outcry at the 2010 elections will be deafening.

Nancy Pelosi vowed in the face of the stunning defeat to forge ahead and pass the legislation notwithstanding. Whitehouse advisors are admitting that it's now or never. Lose this one, and the possibility of universal healthcare will disappear for a half a century. All of a sudden, our liberal politicians are awakening to the bitter news that cultural conservatives are no longer irrelevant to the healthcare debate.

Life is full of ironies. The very Senate seat whose iconic occupant championed abortion friendly health care for decades may be the very seat to cause the defeat of the impending goliath at the 11th hour. I'm trying to suppress Schadenfreude. You do the same. It's just not Christian.

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