

Sent: Sun, 06 Sep 2009 14:41:33 -0400
From: "Cherlin, Reid H." <reid_h_cherlin@who.eop.gov>
To: "Gibbs, Robert L." <robert_l_gibbs@who.eop.gov>, "Axelrod, David M." <axelrod_d@who.eop.gov>, "Douglass, Linda D." <linda_d_douglass@who.eop.gov>, "Pfeiffer, Dan" <dpfeiffer@who.eop.gov>, "Burton, William A." <william_a_burton@who.eop.gov>, "Dunn, Anita B." <anita_b_dunn@who.eop.gov>, "Gibbs, Robert L." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=robert_l_gibbs">, "Axelrod, David M." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=david_m_axelrod">, "Pfeiffer, Howard D." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=howard_d_pfeiffer">, "Burton, William A." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=william_a_burton">, "Douglass, Linda D." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=linda_d_douglass">, "Dunn, Anita B." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=anita_b_dunn">
Bcc: "Gibbs, Robert L." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=robert_l_gibbs">, "Axelrod, David M." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=david_m_axelrod">, "Douglass, Linda D." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=linda_d_douglass">, "Pfeiffer, Dan" <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=howard_d_pfeiffer">, "Burton, William A." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=william_a_burton">, "Dunn, Anita B." <"/o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=anita_b_dunn">
Subject: RE: Who's writing the piece today off the sunday shows?

Fyi here's the latest writethru -- headline is "White House: public health care plan is negotiable"

Date: 9/6/2009 11:12 AM

AP-US--Health Care Overhaul,3rd Ld-Writethru/499
Eds: UPDATES with background, additional comments.
White House: public health care plan is negotiable
RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR,Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House officials said Sunday a government health insurance option is negotiable, signaling a potential compromise on an issue that President Barack Obama's liberal supporters consider do-or-die.

As Obama prepares for a Wednesday night speech to Congress in a risky bid to salvage his top domestic priority, political adviser David Axelrod said a public plan is not the core issue in the health care debate. White House spokesman Robert Gibbs danced around a question about whether Obama would veto a bill without the public option.

The president "believes the public option is a good tool," said Axelrod, who joined with Gibbs in a one-two punch on the Sunday talk shows. "It shouldn't define the whole health care debate, however."

Their appearances came ahead of Congress' return this week from a summer break that saw eroding public support for an overhaul and contentious town hall meetings in lawmakers' districts.

Gibbs called the government plan a valuable tool. But asked if Obama would reject legislation that didn't include it, he responded: "We are not going to prejudge where the process will be."

"I doubt we are going to get into heavy veto threats" in the president's speech, Gibbs added.

Their comments on the public plan echoed Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius' remarks last month that a government alternative to private insurance is "not the essential element" in revamping the system to guarantee coverage for all and try to curb unsustainable costs.

Liberals — many of whom want to do away with the private health insurance industry and replace

it with Medicare for all — were furious. At the time, White House officials said Sebelius' remarks were being misinterpreted. Left unclear was Obama's bottom line.

Now it seems that Obama and his top aides are coming around to the view that a public plan is not essential. On a call with prominent liberal House members Friday, Obama refused to be pinned down on the issue, a participant told The Associated Press.

Independents who helped propel Obama to the presidency are increasingly skeptical. Unsubstantiated allegations that the legislation would promote euthanasia grabbed headlines. But beneath such controversies, voters appear most concerned about the scope and costs of the bill — around \$1 trillion over 10 years.

Gibbs said Obama will refocus the debate on the benefits of overhauling the system: more security and lower costs for the majority of people who have health insurance, and new ways to help self-employed people and small businesses get coverage.

"People will leave that speech knowing where he stands," said Gibbs. He said Obama is considering offering his own health care legislation, instead of letting Congress sort out all the details.

Axelrod appeared on NBC's "Meet the Press," while Gibbs was on ABC's "This Week."

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-----Original Message-----

From: Gibbs, Robert L.

Sent: Sunday, September 06, 2009 10:45 AM

To: Axelrod, David M.; Cherlin, Reid H.; Douglass, Linda D.; Pfeiffer, Dan; Burton, William A.; Dunn, Anita B.

Subject: Fw: Who's writing the piece today off the sunday shows?

----- Original Message -----

From: Fournier, Ron <RFournier@ap.org>

To: Gibbs, Robert L.

Sent: Sun Sep 06 10:34:22 2009

Subject: RE: Who's writing the piece today off the sunday shows?

Robert,

The lead surprised me, too, and I've discussed with Ricardo.

Please give him some time with the next lead and to monitor the shows still ongoing.

If you need him later this morning, he's at

P6/b(6)

Ron

Ron Fournier

The Associated Press

office: 202-641-9402

cell: 202-262-1750

-----Original Message-----

From: Gibbs, Robert L. [mailto:Robert_L._Gibbs@who.eop.gov]

Sent: Sunday, September 06, 2009 10:20 AM

To: Pace, David; Loven, Jennifer; Fournier, Ron

Subject: Who's writing the piece today off the sunday shows?

I'm a tad frustrated after reading the headline and breaking news alert about Axelrod's so-called shift...

I said similar and we've been saying all this for weeks - Sebelius said same thing and all wrote it as a shift - if hers what a shift in your opinion so be it, but if Ax says what she said (and coincidentally what the President said in Colorado, how can this also be a shift

Its just not logical

I know you guys are enjoying the last sane day before it all starts over again but can someone pls email me back

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