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Monumental Health Care Vote Looms

Proposal Would Insure Millions More

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POSTED: 2:42 pm EDT March 19, 2010
UPDATED: 5:47 pm EDT March 19, 2010

BOSTON -- Congress is expected to vote Sunday on a bill that could fundamentally change health care in the United States.

President Barack Obama's health care bill would cost \$940 billion over 10 years and would insure 32 million Americans who are currently uninsured.

Almost everyone would be required to have health insurance or pay a fine. Families earning less than \$88,000 would get subsidies to help pay for it.

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There would be new marketplaces to help people who do not get their insurance at work, and insurance companies would no longer be able to deny coverage to people with pre-existing medical conditions.

But how does the president plan to pay for all of this? There will be higher taxes for individuals who make \$200,000 a year or more and couples who earn more than \$250,000 a year.

The president plans to cut \$500 billion from Medicare. Most of it will be taken from the Medicare Advantage program, which pays for private insurance coverage for senior citizens.

The president said his plan will reduce the deficit.

Massachusetts U.S. senators are split on the issue. Democratic Sen. John Kerry supports the bill, and Republican Sen. Scott Brown is opposed.

But it's the state's House delegation that will be voting -- all of them Democrats. Rep. Ed Markey, Rep. Barney Frank, Rep. James McGovern, Rep. Richard Neal, Rep. John Olver, Rep. Niki Tsongas and Rep. William Delahunt said that they will vote yes.

"This bill is fantastic for Massachusetts," Markey said. "This is a big win, win, win for our state, and we will be ringing excess waste and fraud out of the Medicare program, but the benefits we receive will be overwhelming."

Rep. Stephen Lynch plans to vote no.

Rep. John Tierney and Rep. Michael Capuano have yet to announce how they will vote.

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