Obama Calls for End of Partisan Divisiveness Over Health Reform

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At a seven-hour summit with congressional leaders, President Barack Obama made it clear to Republican opponents of his health care reform legislation that the measure will move forward with or without their support, *The Washington Post* reports.

“The question that I’m going to ask myself and I ask of all of you is, Is there enough serious effort that in a month’s time or a few weeks’ time or six weeks’ time we could actually resolve something?” Obama said during the summit. “And if we can’t, then I think we’ve got to go ahead and make some decisions, and then that’s what elections are for.”

Some Republicans argued that the health care system, as it is, does not need changing. They questioned whether the federal government should set standards for coverage or require Americans to buy health insurance. Others urged Obama to scrap his proposal and start from scratch.

According to the article, in order to pass their health reform bill, Democrats will rely on a budget process called reconciliation in which the House of Representatives would approve the bill the Senate passed on Christmas Eve, coupled with compromise provisions that address criticisms of the Senate legislation. The changes would be written under reconciliation rules to prevent a Republican filibuster, allowing the bill to pass the Senate by a majority.

Although Republicans have used reconciliation in recent years, they are trying to paint the Democrats’ use of the maneuver as evidence that they’re manipulating congressional rules.

“I don’t need a poll to know that most of Republican voters are opposed to this bill and might be opposed to the kind of compromise we could craft,” Obama told GOP critics during the session. “It would be very hard for you politically to do this.”

Obama’s proposal, which the White House laid out in detail on February 22, aims to expand coverage to the uninsured while driving down health insurance premiums. In addition, it will end coverage discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions, will help financially struggling states pay for Medicaid and will eliminate the “doughnut hole” coverage gap in Medicare’s prescription drug program. It will not include a government-backed public option—which would compete with private companies—but will include state-based insurance exchanges as opposed to

the single national exchange proposed by the House.

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