

KnightMUN XVII

United States Senate 2021

Background Guide



WELCOME LETTER

Honorable Senators,

It gives us great pleasure to welcome you to KnightMUNXVII! My name is Michael Desmond and I will be directing this committee on the United States Senate. Now, a little about me: I am a Senior here at UCF pursuing a degree in Political Science - International Relations with a certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). I have been involved in Model UN for three years, and I have been to conferences around the country. If you were in the Council of the European Union committee last year, I look forward to seeing you again! Outside of school, I enjoy watching political dramas like Scandal, and cooking!

The year is 2021, Donald Trump has just begun his second term as President of the United States. The Republican and Democratic parties are more fractured than ever. In the House of Representatives and in the Senate, the Democrats hold a slight majority. However, this majority does not necessarily mean Democratic control, as the party has become split over the years between the Democratic-Socialist/Progressive wing and the Centrist-Liberal/Moderate wing of the party. The Republican Party, however, has coalesced around Trump's "Keep America Great!" nationalist agenda, with most of the opposition to Trump having lost their seats in past elections. The Supreme Court is 6-3 in favor of the Republicans.

Senators, during this session of Congress you will be discussing a plethora of issues and you will be responsible for carrying out the will of your constituents. In this background guide, you will be given information relating to the current Healthcare debate that the country is embroiled in and your constituents are expecting you to pass legislation, or not, regarding this topic. However, you should be prepared to discuss other topics such as immigration reform, gun policy reform, and tax policy, in addition to healthcare.

COMMITTEE HISTORY

The United States is a constitutional republic with a president, bicameral legislature, and separate judiciary. The two houses of congress are the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the Senate, each state has two representatives, regardless of state population. Elected officials serve six year terms without any term limits. The role of Senators is to represent the entire state, rather than a district within the state like a Representative in the House of Representatives. The leader of the Senate is the Vice President, but the Senate Majority Leader --currently Chuck Schumer -- who controls the flow of debate and legislation, is the de facto leader.



The Senate has certain powers as outlined in the United States Constitution. These powers include involvement in impeachment proceedings (acting as jury and judge), confirming Presidential cabinet nominees, approving treaties, and conducting investigations of the Executive. They also are involved in the process of creating federal laws. Any draft bill that is created in the Senate must also be approved by the House of Representatives.

TIMELINE

2017:

- May:
 - Republicans attempt to repeal the ACA (Affordable Care Act). They are, however, unsuccessful.

2018:

- November:
 - Midterm elections. Republicans expand their control of both houses of Congress. The Republicans now have a supermajority, allowing the party to pass any legislation it desires.
- December:
 - Republicans, emboldened by their support in the 2018 Midterm Elections, have started discussing plans to completely repeal Obamacare/Affordable Care Act, pass funding for a southern border wall, and sweeping immigration reform.

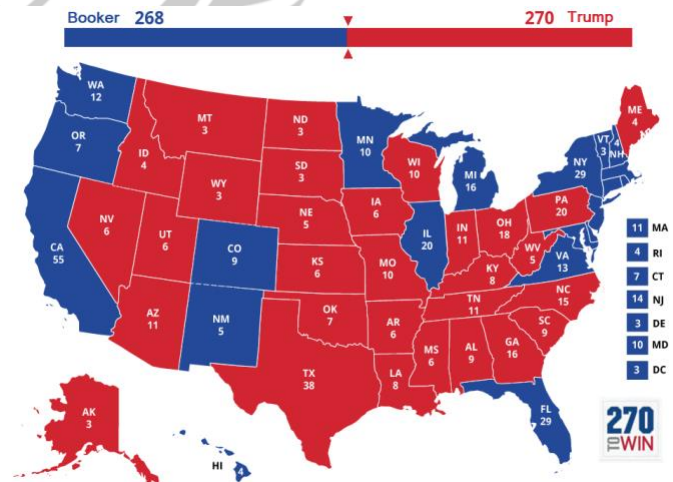
2019:

- January:
 - The 116th United States Senate is sworn into office.
 - The new republican-majority congress began working on a repeal of Obamacare.
- February:
 - Nerve agent deployed in LAX, 10 die. Suspect is Iranian.
 - Attorney General Jeff Sessions is fired by President Trump. His replacement, Scott Pruitt the former EPA Director, is confirmed by the Republican-majority senate.
- March:
 - Obamacare is repealed without a replacement. Americans who were receiving coverage under the Affordable Care act will lose insurance in the next fiscal year.
 - Scott Pruitt fires Special Counsel Robert Mueller, causing mass protests across the country.
 - The House of Representatives votes on articles of impeachment introduced by some moderate Republicans and the Democrats, however it narrowly fails. This signals the end of the Russia investigation.
- April:
 - Largest mass shooting in history: 90 die at the Masjid Yaseen Mosque in Shreveport. Evidence suggests that it was committed by Loyal White Knights of Louisiana, multiple shooters involved. President Trump says he will veto any bill putting members of American white supremacy groups on a terrorist, no-fly list after bipartisan legislation is drafted by moderate Democrats and Republicans. Defeated in the House by the Freedom Caucus with President Trump's insistence.
- May:
 - Border wall legislation passed; breaking ground in June, expected to be done in January 2021
- September:
 - Texas Sterling Construction and AECOM break ground on border wall construction just outside Chula Vista, California. The ceremony is attended by the President and Vice President, but marred by a mass demonstration of immigrant farm workers living in California, saying that the wall is draconian and a human rights violation.
 - The week after the protest, leaders of the demonstration speak in front of the United Nations HRC, demanding the council to denounce the wall as a human rights violation.

2020:

- March:
 - New fiscal year begins. 11. 4 Million Americans previously insured by the ACA are now without insurance.
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- April:
 - A mass demonstration in Mexicali causes border wall construction to be temporarily shut down; three construction workers are killed by Mexican protesters.
 - The New York Times publishes its first of ten investigative pieces on the failing healthcare system in America
- May:
 - Democratic Party chair sends a memo to congressional Democrats running for re-election, saying if they do not campaign on restoring universal health care they will not receive any money from the party. The memo is leaked by the Washington Post. Trump and Republicans refuse to comment on the story.
- June:
 - Border wall construction resumes on the Eastern side of the border in Texas; construction in Mexicali is suspended. National Guard is deployed by orders of President Trump to protect construction workers building the wall; a Southern Texas volunteer civilian defense force also follows the contractors and the National Guard.
- October:
 - One week before the general election, the New York Times dedicates its entire October 27 newspaper to its tenth and final investigative report on the failing healthcare system in America. By their estimates, over 25 thousand people have died as a result of lack of healthcare, and those numbers are only expected to increase. The editor of the Times calls on Trump to declare a national health care crisis, and demand a reform bill from Congress. The story sends shock waves through American society; the only person who seems to be ignoring the story is President Trump himself.
- November:
 - The general election on November 3rd granted President Trump a second term in office, defeating Democratic candidate Cory Booker. Notably, not a single House Republican that voted for Donald Trump's impeachment was re-elected, instead being replaced by far-right Republican candidates in their primary or being defeated by their Democratic opponent in the general. Trump brings this to light by mocking said representatives in a series of tweets, culminating in a statement-- "The GOP has NO ROOM FOR TRAITORS!" This becomes the new rallying cry of the elected far right when faced with moderate Republican opposition.



TOPIC I: HEALTHCARE

Introduction

The United States currently spends about 19% of its GDP on healthcare, the most of any other industrialized state in the world. It is also the only post-industrial state to not guarantee some kind of universal healthcare coverage to its citizens. This topic will be broken down into smaller parts, including medicare, medicaid, and explaining the single-payer versus multi-payer systems

Medicare:

Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people who are 65 or older, certain younger people with disabilities, and people with End-Stage Renal Disease. Medicare was established in the 1965 Social Security Act Amendments signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Medicare is financed by a tax on the earnings of employees (payroll tax), matched by contributions by employers, and through the beneficiaries of the program itself. In the first three years of the program, nearly 20 million beneficiaries enrolled in it.

Medicaid:

Medicaid was established at the same time as Medicare by the 1965 Social Security Act Amendments signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. This program is insurance for the poor. This program differs from Medicare in that, while there are federal guidelines that states must follow, states themselves (including Washington D.C. and U.S. territories) are able to decide how to administer the program.

Medicaid also includes CHIP, or the Children Health Insurance Program. This is, as the name suggests, a health insurance program for children under the age of 18 for families who would otherwise not be able to afford insurance. This program was in response of the failure of the Clinton administration to pass comprehensive healthcare reform. It was a bipartisan initiative, co-sponsored by Senator Ted Kennedy (D), and Senator Orrin Hatch (R), with support from then First Lady Hillary Clinton and was passed in 1997. The authority for Medicare, Medicaid and CHIP comes from Title XXI of the Social Security Act.

Single Payer Systems:

The term, “Single Payer” refers to who pays the hospitals for the goods and services rendered for the patients. In a single payer system, there is only one payer. This system is financed through taxes collected and is then rendered to the healthcare providers. There are many single payer systems in the world, from the Canadian style where the government contracts a private firm to

provide insurance or the British style where the government itself employs the resources and personnel to provide healthcare. Single payer systems do not refer to who provides healthcare, rather it only refers to how the services are paid for, not who provides services (which may be both public or private), and in this system it is through a single public firm.

Multi-payer Systems:

Multi-payer systems are the exact opposite of Single Payer systems. In this system, there are multiple sources of funding for healthcare: insurance companies, public programs like Medicare and Medicaid, and the patients themselves. This is the type of healthcare that the United States has.

THE COST OF HEALTHCARE

The United States has the highest cost of healthcare in the developed world. The United States also has the highest rate of obesity, heart and lung diseases, sexually transmitted infections (STI's), infant mortality, and adolescent pregnancies. U.S. healthcare costs were approximately \$3.2 trillion or nearly \$10,000 per person on average in 2015. Major categories of expense include hospital care (32%), physician and clinical services (20%), and prescription drugs (10%). U.S. costs in 2016 were substantially higher than other OECD countries, at 17.2% GDP versus 12.4% GDP for the next most expensive country (Switzerland). Some of the many reasons cited for the cost differential with other countries include: Higher administrative costs of a private system with multiple payment processes; higher costs for the same products and services; more expensive volume/mix of services with higher usage of more expensive specialists; aggressive treatment of very sick elderly versus palliative care; less use of government intervention in pricing; and higher income levels driving greater demand for healthcare. By 2050, estimates predict that 20 percent of the US population will be 65 and older, which presents a unique challenge for the United States. The cost of paying for healthcare of the aging American population is expected to increase dramatically.

INSURANCE REFORM

The debate has involved certain insurance industry practices such as the placing of caps on coverage, the high level of co-pays even for essential services such as preventative procedures, the refusal of many insurers to cover pre-existing conditions or adding premium loading for these conditions, and practices which some people regard as egregious such as the additional loading

of premiums for women, the regarding of having previously been assaulted by a partner as having a pre-existing condition, and even the cancellation of insurance policies on very flimsy grounds when a claimant who had paid in many premiums presents with a potentially expensive medical condition.

TAX REFORM

In November 2009, The Economist estimated that taxing employer-provided health insurance (which is presently exempt from tax) would add \$215 billion per year to federal tax revenue during the 2013–2014 periods. Peter Singer wrote in the New York Times that the current exclusion of insurance premiums from compensation represents a \$200 billion subsidy for the private insurance industry and that it would likely not exist without it. In other words, taxpayers might be more inclined to change behavior or the system itself if they were paying \$200 billion more in taxes each year related to health insurance. To put this amount in perspective, the federal government collected \$1,146 billion in income taxes in 2008, so \$200 billion represents a 17.5% increase in the effective tax rate.

INDEPENDENT ADVISORY PANELS

President Obama has proposed an "Independent Medicare Advisory Panel" (IMAC) to make recommendations on Medicare reimbursement policy and other reforms. Comparative effectiveness research would be one of many tools used by the IMAC. The IMAC concept was endorsed in a letter from several prominent healthcare policy experts, as summarized by OMB Director Peter Orszag

RATIONING OF CARE

Healthcare rationing may refer to the restriction of medical care service delivery based on any number of objective or subjective criteria. Republican Newt Gingrich argued that the reform plans supported by President Obama expand the control of government over healthcare decisions, which he referred to as a type of healthcare rationing. President Obama has argued that U.S. healthcare is already rationed, based on income, type of employment, and medical pre-existing conditions, with nearly 46 million uninsured. He argued that millions of Americans are denied coverage or face higher premiums as a result of medical pre-existing conditions.[60]

COMMITTEE HISTORY

SOUTH

FL: Scott R Rubio R

TX: O'Rourke D Cornyn R

AL: Jones D Shelby R

LA: Kennedy R Cassidy R

AK: Cotton R

NEW ENGLAND

NY: Gillibrand D Ocasio-Cortez D

NJ: Booker D, Lobiando R

MA: Warren D, Kennedy D

MIDWEST

IA: Joni Ernst R

MI: Michael Moore D

MO: McCaskill D

WEST

CA: Harris D

AZ: Giffords D Arpaio R

OR: Wyden D

MT: Tester D Daines R

NV: Cortez Masto D

RUST BELT

OH: Brown D Portman R

PA: Toomy R, Casey D