

NEW WHITE HOUSE GARDEN



LETTERS

Lost in the Haze

Your article regarding Wednesday's consideration of House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer's (D-Md.) resolution regarding the status of the ethics committee's probe into the PMA Group made clear that the Democratic majority's parliamentary games intended to confuse and obfuscate the issue were successful ("Democrats Try Ethics Gambit," June 4). Unfortunately, some basic facts got lost in the haze created by this charade.

The article states: "The measure passed 270-134, with 28 Republicans crossing the aisle to support it." But the corresponding roll-call vote, No. 300, was

described on the Clerk's Web site and in the Congressional Record as a motion to "refer," not a motion to "adopt." The article goes on to say that the House "on a party-line voice vote, decided to refer the measure to the ethics committee." Again, this is just plain wrong. That voice vote was on ordering the previous question, i.e., ending debate, on the motion to refer, not adoption of that motion.

The fact is, the House never adopted the resolution in question. It only referred the measure to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct for its further consideration. It had roughly the same effect as if Mr. Hoyer had dropped the resolution into the hopper. In order to adopt the res-

olution, the ethics committee would need to mark up the resolution and file a report with the House, and then the House would need to consider the resolution again to actually "adopt" it.

Had we actually been voting to adopt the resolution, the majority might have enjoyed more bipartisan support. Instead, they chose to engage in subtle procedural tricks rather than confronting their own problems head-on. Roll Call usually does a better job of separating the facts from the spin, but in this case you fell for the majority's bait — hook, line and sinker.

Rep. David Dreier (R-Calif.)
Ranking member
House Rules Committee

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GUEST OBSERVER

By Rep. Lois Capps



Controlling Health Care Costs Requires a Heart

In grade school, children learn that you can't have a healthy body without a healthy heart. Unfortunately, millions of Americans suffer from preventable cardiac disease that gives them not only unhealthy hearts, poor overall health and shortened life spans, but also result in a substantial financial strain on our nation's health care system.

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer in America, responsible for about 865,000 deaths per year. Along with the tragic toll on human life, the direct and indirect cost of cardiovascular disease and stroke in 2009 is estimated to be \$475 billion, according to the American Heart Association. Put another way, the economic impact of heart disease amounts to more than two-thirds of the money that President Barack Obama wants to set aside in his budget for health reform.

Numbers like that, however, also offer us a huge opportunity. By ensuring access to simple and inexpensive prevention measures that focus on keeping our hearts healthy, we can save lives, improve the quality of life for millions of our fellow citizens and lower overall health care costs. Research has shown that these common-sense measures are very effective.

Indeed, expanding cardiac disease prevention and treatment strategies provides another compelling motivation for Congress to enact comprehensive health care reform.

On Tuesday, in the Cannon Caucus Room of the Capitol, Senators and Representatives will have the opportunity to visit the Healthy Heart Expo, where they can learn how prevention and wellness can reduce the incidence of heart disease and stroke. A cross-section of patient advocacy, physician, research, government and industry organizations will come together to exhibit tools and techniques for protecting and improving cardiovascular health.

Members of Congress will see firsthand how smart federal policies can tap into the wide array of existing advancements in wellness, diagnostics and therapies to reduce the impact of cardiovascular disease.

For example, thanks to modern medicine, there are now laboratory tests available for blood sugar that can detect diabetes early, offering critical opportunities for targeted treatment and therapy. However, evidence suggests these tests are not nearly as widely used as they could be, and the results are troubling: the American Heart Association reports that 6.4 million American adults have undiagnosed diabetes and are therefore unaware they are at an increased risk of developing heart disease.

This lack of such basic knowledge is a glaring hole in our health care safety net and an indication that our world-class medical technology is being woefully underutilized if Americans cannot avail themselves of it to learn such critical information about their health.

Simply put, meaningful health reform must address the issue of access for all our citizens. Clearly, policymakers have many questions both large and small to answer. Will health reform provide all patients with access to well-established screening and diagnostic tools? Will those include access to programs like smoking cessation and weight loss programs that reduce the odds of a heart attack? Will the cost of these kinds of preventive measures be covered? The list goes on.

But the basic message is that cardiovascular disease is largely preventable and we are not lacking in technologies to diagnose and treat it. So as we enact comprehensive health care reform, we must ensure all Americans have access to simple but effective medical tools. That is how we can ensure we all have healthy hearts and healthy bodies. And that is something even a kid should know.

Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.), a retired nurse, is a member of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health.

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