

Democrats scurry for support on health bill; \$1.2 trillion bill raises questions on insuring abortions, illegals.

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Body

WASHINGTON --- **Democrats** worked late into the night Friday trying to secure **support** for a planned Saturday vote on **health** care reform amid last-minute concerns over **abortion** funding and insurance for illegal immigrants.

"We're moving, we're working on it," said U.S. Rep. John Lewis, an Atlanta **Democrat**. "I think we'll have the votes to pass it. We're not there yet, but we'll work it out."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other top **Democrats** said they were still hoping to vote sometime late Saturday on their **\$1.2 trillion** package to extend **health** care coverage to tens of millions of uninsured Americans. By delaying a vote, **Democrats** risk that more concerns will be **raised** about their plan.

But in a conference call with reporters, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, a Maryland **Democrat**, acknowledged that a vote may be postponed until Monday or Tuesday. That would allow more time to try and win more **support** and address worries that the plan could open the door for federal funding for **abortions** and **health** care for illegal immigrants.

President Barack Obama, who has said he can't **support** any plan that includes publicly funded **abortion** or opens public insurance plans up to illegal immigrants, was scheduled to make a rare visit to the House this morning to give a last-minute pitch to try and win **support** for a Democratic plan.

While **Democrats** were trying to calm fears by some of their members about federal funding for **abortion** and immigration, a group of Republicans led by U.S. Rep. Nathan Deal of Gainesville introduced legislation they said would close a loophole that would otherwise allow 2.5 million more illegal immigrants to buy **health** insurance through a government-sponsored program.

Proponents of the idea say it will get more illegal immigrants out of hospital emergency rooms and require them to pay for insurance instead of getting it through the government. But Deal and other critics said it's a bad idea.

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"When you create a government program such as the exchange, and then you allow those who have violated our laws to come in, there is a degree of taxpayer subsidy --- there is still taxpayer money that is going in that direction," Deal said.

Republican U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, who co-sponsored the proposed amendment with Deal, called it "absolutely unconscionable" to let illegal immigrants get health insurance through a public program.

At the White House, spokesman Robert Gibbs reiterated that Obama has said he will not support a bill that funds abortions or gives illegal immigrants access to public insurance exchanges. Gibbs also expressed doubts that a bill would be passed today.

"While the president would like it, [today] will not be the final vote on a bill coming to his desk," Gibbs said. "But he sees [today] as an important step forward."

Democrats, who hold 258 seats in the House, need 218 votes to pass the bill. Republican leaders have pledged that none of their 177 House members will vote for the plan.

"Not one Republican will vote for this bill," Republican U.S. Rep. Eric Cantor, the House minority whip, said at a rally Thursday by opponents to Democrats' health reform plans. "And ... we're going to try to pick up as many common-sense Democrats as we can."

The Associated Press contributed to this report

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