

Washington Post Story



HEALTH CARE

Obama Rallies Doctors

By Scott Wilson

President Obama gathered doctors at the White House Monday for a pep rally in support of his health care reform plans, which he argued would help them spend more time treating patients and less time filling out forms.

Obama said little new about his signature domestic policy initiative, but he used the choreographed event to put some momentum behind reform proposals taking shape in Congress. The key Senate Finance Committee may vote this week on its version of health-care reform legislation.

The roughly 150 doctors assembled wore white lab coats under the brilliant fall sun, some sheepishly carrying them under their arms as they made their way to the folding chairs. In opening his remarks, Obama called them “spiffy.”

The guest list contained doctors from every state, and their names were listed in White House background materials. By gathering physicians from around the country, the White House appeared to be trying to push its reform message down into state and local media, using the doctors as representatives.

“If you’re willing to speak out strongly on behalf of the things you care about and what you see each and every day as you’re serving patients all across the country, I’m confident we are going to get health reform passed this year,” Obama

told them.

Obama used the doctors' presence to argue generally that those who know the health care system best – the nation's doctors and nurses – are among the chief proponents of reform. His [brief remarks](#) were interrupted several times by applause and a few cheers.

He said “we have heard all the arguments” for and against reform, citing at one point “the crazy claims” that his plans call for so-called death panels that would make end-of-life decisions for seniors.

Obama spelled out “again,” as he put it, the insurance guarantees and insurance-exchange proposal that he supports in legislation emerging in Congress. He highlighted one proposal to forgive the loans of medical students who decide to practice primary-care medicine in rural and underserved communities, drawing hearty applause in return.

But his chief argument for the doctors was that his plan would allow them to better fulfill the “oath” they took as they began practicing medicine. He said that oath was not to “become bean counters or paper pushers,” but “to save lives.” In a reformed health care system, he said, they would have more time to do that.

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