

ROLL CALL

Baucus Says Finance Needs More Time to Finalize Health Care Bill

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Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.), emerging Wednesday from a closed-door session of his committee, acknowledged his panel needs more time to craft its bipartisan health care reform bill, which had been scheduled for a markup next Tuesday.

Baucus said good progress was being made on a bill that would cost less than \$1 trillion and be deficit neutral. But panel members are still putting the package together, forcing a delay in his original plan for Tuesday's markup, he said.

Baucus confirmed that the markup of the Finance bill might now be delayed until after the July Fourth recess, although he insisted that doing so would not necessarily impede the Senate from passing a bill before the August recess begins.

"We will have a markup when we're ready," Baucus told reporters. "I want to make sure that we have a complete package."

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee began the markup of its bill Wednesday. Finance and HELP are scheduled to merge their bills into a single vehicle, which would then proceed to the floor.

Finance ranking member Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) said after Wednesday's closed-door Finance session that three key issues have yet to be negotiated: the possible inclusion a government-run, public insurance option, financing for the bill, and the "pay or play" component affecting the business community.

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