

To: Dr. Naff
From: Maria Jose Moraga
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Subject: The Battle Over the Clinton Health Care Proposal

Introduction

It's a national problem when there are millions of hard-working families that do not have health insurance. In the 1992 U.S. presidential election, Bill Clinton campaigned heavily for health care reform and promised every American health insurance. After Clinton won the election, he announced in 1993 his plan to implement a comprehensive health care reform package. The proposed plan was a mandate enforcing employers to provide health insurance coverage to all of their employees through competitive but closely-regulated health maintenance organizations. Even though the proposal was still in its developmental stages, President Clinton announced that his wife Hillary Clinton, and close friend and advisor, Ira Magaziner would help him create a detailed proposal within the first 100 days of his administration. During that time, the Democrats controlled both the House and the Senate and it looked highly probable that Congress would pass Clinton's health care reform plan. This report will highlight three major issues involving President Clinton's health care reform plan, discuss key players, and the resolution of the case.

Issues

1. President Clinton appointed Hillary Clinton and Ira Magaziner to the "President's Task Force on National Health Reform" with the goal of developing a comprehensive health care reform package. Hillary and Ira made some mistakes from the beginning including, holding task force meetings in secrecy and refusing to accept input from people outside of government. Some of the mistakes identified caused a lack of cooperation and input from stakeholders and experts in the field. In order to effectively implement policy, power should be broadly shared with partners involved in the issue (Kettl, 2002, p.58). Due to Hillary's and Ira's lack of collaboration, they were unable to ascertain party support, causing their health care reform proposal to fall behind President Clinton's strict deadline. Because health care affects

millions of Americans, crucial decisions need to be made collectively with institutional and non-institutional partners to manage the problem efficiently.

2. In this case, there were too many interest groups and stakeholders working towards different objectives. Insurance companies, for example, spent millions of dollars campaigning against the Clinton's plan because they were concerned that it would affect their profit. Small businesses were also invested in this policy battle because the employer mandate would have driven many of them out of business. In addition, Congress was dealing with many different proposals, which caused confusion and disagreement among stakeholders. It is very difficult to implement policy and promote change when there are many parties involved in the policy process (Theodoulou & Kofinis, 2004, p.137).

3. At that moment in time, health care reform was not a top priority for President Clinton because he had to deal with other pressing issues like the fight over NAFTA and the crisis in Haiti and Bosnia. If President Clinton placed a higher priority on the reform process more, his health care reform plan would have not faded away. Through good leadership and active participation, the president could have comanded more attention to his health care reform plan. However, the main problem was that the president had an ambitious agenda and it was impossible for him to complete it in such a short period of time given the external events occurring at the time. In general, it was bad timing for the president to pursue a health care reform when he had bigger issues to take care of. In order to successfully implement effective policy change, there must be a policy window (Theodoulou & Kofinis, 2004, p.123). Unfortunately, President Clinton's plan failed because his opportunity to push forward the reform was surpassed by other more pressing policy issues.

Resolution of the Case

After all the debates in Congress, President Clinton's health care reform plan did not pass. There were too many stakeholders who disliked his proposal and there was not enough time to iron out the differences. Overall, this case was a great example of how government needs close and active partnerships with non-governmental partners to accomplish its goals (Kettl, 2002, p.24).

References

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