

The New York Times

## The Caucus

The Politics and Government Blog of The Times

---

December 2, 2009, 5:22 pm

### Democratic Governors Voice Concern Over Health Care Bill

By [ADAM NAGOURNEY](#)

Republican governors are not alone in being concerned about what the proposed [health care legislation](#) might mean for their already overstrained budgets: Democrats share the same worries.

“We’ve got concerns,” Gov. Jack Markell of Delaware Jeff Fusco/Getty Images Gov. Jack Markell of Delaware said in an interview Wednesday, hours before getting elected as the chairman of the Democratic Governors Association. “And we’re doing our best to communicate them. We understand the need to get something done, and we’re supportive of getting something done. But we want to make sure it’s done in a way that state budgets are not negatively impacted.”

From the start, Republican governors have been more outspokenly critical about the health care legislation – in particular, [the bill proposed by Harry Reid](#) of Nevada, the Senate majority leader – which they said would saddle them with millions of dollars in additional Medicaid costs as insurance coverage is expanded. At [their own meeting two weeks ago in Texas](#), Republican governors declared Democrats felt the same way as they did, but were less apt to say it out of loyalty to [President Obama](#).

Asked about that, Mr. Markell responded: “Perhaps we’ve expressed some of our concerns less publicly. But I believe all governors are certainly concerned about what the potential impact is of some of these bills.”

Mr. Markell said that there was no division between governors and the administration on the need to get some sort of health care bill through; he said that he was reminded of the need in conversations with small businesses struggling with health care costs and constituents who have been unable to get health care coverage. He said his

concern was some of the bills being considered would do that by shifting some of the costs to the state – but said he remained confident, after conversations with the White House, that would not be the case.

Whatever the outcome of the health care deliberations, Mr. Markell said he did not believe it would affect the electoral outcome for governors in 2010, a year in which 19 gubernatorial seats currently held by Democrats are on the ballot. The key issues, the governor said, were jobs and the economy.

And to that regard, Mr. Markell said that he was hopeful that the White House and Congress would dispose of the health care deliberations and move on to discussing some sort of jobs creation legislation.

“Right now I believe we need to be focused really significantly on the state level on jobs and on the economic climate overall,” he said. Asked if Mr. Markell thought Mr. Obama and Congress were spending too much time on health care at the expense of the economy, he responded: “Well I feel it would be terrific if they could finish health care and move on.”