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Dems vs. Dems

Over the August Congressional recess, warned Nancy Pelosi last week, Republicans and insurance companies will resort to “carpet bombing, slash and burn, shock and awe” to bring down ObamaCare. Which makes us wonder how the House Speaker would describe what Democrats are doing to each other.

The Dresden fire-bombing?

The real political news this month isn’t Republicans vs. Democrats, and certainly not insurance companies vs. Democrats. If anything, the health-care business lobbies are *helping* Democrats by keeping quiet and hoping their silence buys their survival as heavily regulated utilities. If the insurance companies were any quieter, they’d be Trappists.

The news is how the political left and its lobbies are roughing up fellow Democrats who won’t get with President Obama’s government-run program. They’re treating the centrists who helped make them a majority as if they were Newt Gingrich without the social conscience.

On Friday, Democracy for America and the Progressive Change Campaign Committee put out a “rapid-response ad” against Nebraska Senator Ben Nelson, who is lukewarm about a government-run insurance scheme, the so-called public option. “Will Sen. Nelson choose the insurance interests who fund his campaigns to the tune of over \$2 million dollars?” the ad declares. Democracy for America calls the ad “a warning shot to any Senator who tries to block President Obama’s public health insurance option.”

Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus is another target because he’s negotiating with Republicans. The same “progressive” outfits recently ran an ad attacking Mr. Baucus for “threatening” the public option and “taking” \$3.9 million “from health and insurance interests.” The Montana Democrat was also rapped for trying to scale back the cost to under \$900 billion. In case Mr. Baucus didn’t get the hint, fellow Senator Tom Harkin publicly noted last week that Democrats hold a secret ballot for committee chairmen every two years. Better hire a food taster, Max.

Over in the House, the Blue Dogs have received similar treatment since they raised doubts last months about the 5.4% surtax, among other problems in the House bill. The DNC immediately targeted the districts of 12 Democratic Members of Henry Waxman’s Energy and Commerce Committee with a “It’s time for reform” television ad. MoveOn.org also called out its troops to pressure Blue Dog Democrats not to miss “a once-in-a-generation chance to pass real health care reform.” The pressure seems to have worked because enough Blue Dogs fell in line to pass the bill with only token changes through committee last week.

Here’s a typical email letter we’ve been receiving lately by the thousands targeting Democrats from the left, this one aimed at five-term Democrat Jim Matheson of Utah:

“Subject: Who Does Jim Matheson Work For—Blue Cross, or the Voters?”

The text says “Jim Matheson claims that he’s ‘taking on’ the insurance industry by asking for ‘triggers’ [before a public option would begin]. But ‘triggers’ are just what the insurance industry lobby wants. They don’t want anyone eating their profits . . . and Jim Matheson is helping them protect their profits. Jim Matheson’s district has a 12.6% uninsured rate, one of the highest in the country. Why would he want people in his district to suffer so Blue Cross can make more money? ” The letter is signed by a KEVIN SNOW, who is clearly part of some left-wing blast attack group. Mr. Matheson voted against the Waxman bill last week.

Even the Democratic National Committee is trashing Democrats, presumably with a green light from Mr. Obama and Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel. Mr. Obama’s political arm, Organizing for America, which is officially a wing of the DNC, is running ads to press Democratic Senators in Arkansas, Indiana, Florida, Louisiana, North Dakota, Nebraska and Ohio. The outfit has also staged demonstrations outside Senator Bill Nelson’s Florida offices. The campaign is heavy-handed enough that even Majority Leader Harry Reid denounced it as “a waste of money.”

This intraparty smackdown is all the more remarkable because, by winning in swing or GOP-heavy districts and states, these Members have given Democrats their governing majorities. If there’s a voter backlash in 2010, these Members will also be the first to be washed out to sea. Yet it’s becoming clearer by the day that Democratic leaders view these moderates as mere cannon-fodder footsoldiers in the great liberal revolution of 2009. And if you have to shoot a couple of them yourself to keep them all marching straight, so be it.

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