

OBAMA'S LEGACY

HARD WORK IS OVER,

The plan was toast without 'Lyndon Johnson in a skirt'

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WASHINGTON — Those who know Nancy Pelosi best say without her, President Obama wouldn't have been able to pop open the champagne bottle over his momentous health care win.

Pelosi loves quoting legendary House Speaker Tip O'Neill, and her fans say she's now in the same league as the Democratic lion of the House.

"This has been a remarkable string of victories. Sometimes you look down the field and say, 'How is she going to pull this one off?' And the next thing you know she scores," said Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-Brooklyn).

"The real story here is how Nancy Pelosi dragged Harry Reid and Barack Obama over the finish line," he added.

Asked in an ABC interview yesterday if she's the "most powerful woman in 100 years," Pelosi paused, then smiled, "That sounds good."

Even fervent Obama boosters concede Pelosi's clear-eyed commitment to liberal reform, steely determination and tenacity in whipping nervous Democrats into line made the difference between ignominious failure and victory.

"She's Lyndon Johnson in a skirt," Democratic political strategist Mark Siegel said of the San Francisco grandmother, who turns 70 Friday. "She was patient, tireless, persistent and cajoling — and she pulled off what no one else could."

Rep. Joe Crowley (D-Queens) thinks her work ethic and strategic vision top all her attributes. "I can't think of a smarter person on policy or politics," he said. "And I've never seen anyone work as hard at it as she does at both."

Long before Obama gave Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) a ride on Air Force One, Pelosi made a strong gesture for his vote by allowing three hours of debate on a resolution to end the war in Afghanistan.

She also waited out pro-life colleague Bart Stupak of Michigan, knowing he had gone too far out on a limb and would cave and ultimately vote yes.

"She said, 'We're not negotiating,' and she let him hang out there alone for a while. She knew he would come around," said a leadership source.

If she feels burned or insulted, beware. Rep. Steve Lynch (D-Mass.) recently made a dismissive comment that angered Pelosi, whose dad was a machine-pol mayor of Baltimore.

"The speaker doesn't tolerate nonsense," said a lawmaker familiar with the exchange. "I wouldn't want to be Steve Lynch right now."

Since becoming the first woman speaker four years ago, Pelosi has been a favorite whipping girl of the GOP, a Democratic version of Newt Gingrich. Republicans sneer at her liberal politics and designer outfits.

Today, she's smiling and they're fuming.

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What's going to change and when

The health care reform bill President Obama is to sign today lays out a series of actions set to kick in this year — starting in June — with others to follow quickly.

The Senate could tweak the timing of some provisions in a reconciliation bill, but here's the basic calendar:

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

■ **SMALL BUSINESSES:** Tax credits will start flowing to businesses with fewer than 50 employees, covering 35% of premiums, to help them afford coverage. By 2014, that will rise to 50%.

EFFECTIVE THREE MONTHS AFTER ENACTMENT, OR AROUND JUNE 23, 2010

■ **HIGH-RISK POOL:** For adults with pre-existing conditions, a high-risk pool will be set up to offer coverage and theoretically hold down costs.

JULY 1, 2010

■ **INDOOR TANNING TAX:** Imposes a 10% tax on indoor tanning services.

EFFECTIVE SIX MONTHS AFTER ENACTMENT, OR AROUND SEPT. 23, 2010

■ **YOUNG ADULTS:** Requires insurers to let young people stay on their parents' policy up to their 27th birthday, assuming mom and dad say yes.

■ **PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS:** Insurers will be barred from denying coverage to kids with pre-existing

conditions. Adults will have to wait until 2014 for the same protection.

■ **NO LIMITS ON COVERAGE:** Insurers will no longer be allowed to place lifetime caps on benefits.

■ **BANS "RESCISSION":** Insurers will be prohibited from dropping people from coverage when they get sick.

BEGINNING SOMETIME IN 2010 (NO FIRM DATE MENTIONED, BEYOND THIS YEAR)

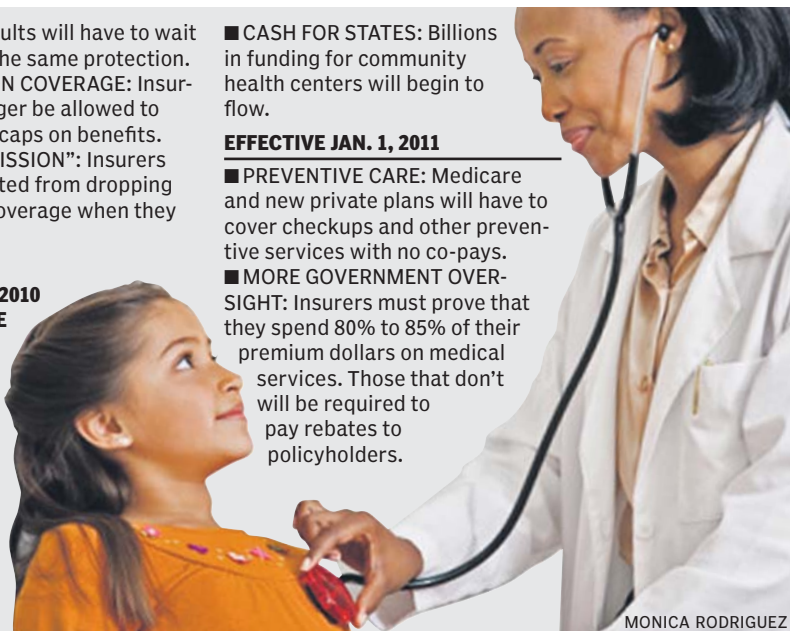
■ **SENIORS:** Will get a \$250 rebate to help cover the "doughnut hole" in Medicare drug coverage.

■ **CASH FOR STATES:** Billions in funding for community health centers will begin to flow.

EFFECTIVE JAN. 1, 2011

■ **PREVENTIVE CARE:** Medicare and new private plans will have to cover checkups and other preventive services with no co-pays.

■ **MORE GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT:** Insurers must prove that they spend 80% to 85% of their premium dollars on medical services. Those that don't will be required to pay rebates to policyholders.



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