

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Neera Tanden [redacted]
Sent: Friday, June 5, 2009 4:43 PM
To: H
Subject: last email on this subject

Sorry to flood your email, but I couldn't resist sending this to you from Ben Smith. [redacted]

A year later, Hillary wins

A year ago today, the final set of primaries made official the foregone conclusion that Barack Obama had won the primary, and Hillary Clinton lost it.

There's far too much going on today to dwell on an anniversary, but it does seem worth noting one particular piece of news in its light: On the central health care policy debate of the Democratic Primary -- which was, to be fair, conducted within a fairly narrow frame -- Obama appears to have conceded today to a Senate plan likely to more closely resemble Clinton's.

In a dense, careful letter to Ted Kennedy and Max Baucus, Obama offered his principles for a health care plan and conceded on a central point: He is now open to an individual mandate, which he campaigned against, and which is now being talked about by Senators of both parties with the buzzword "shared responsibility."

Obama still backs a "hardship waiver" for people unable to afford the mandate -- which is consistent with the core of his objection to the mandate. But what he cast as a principled difference of approach -- was the problem merely that people couldn't afford insurance? or something more? -- seems to have been conceded.

Here's the relevant paragraph:

I understand the Committees are moving towards a principle of shared responsibility -- making every American responsible for having health insurance coverage, and asking that employers share in the cost. I share the goal of ending lapses and gaps in coverage that make us less healthy and drive up everyone's costs, and I am open to your ideas on shared responsibility. But I believe if we are going to make people responsible for owning health insurance, we must make health care affordable. If we do end up with a system where people are responsible for their own insurance, we need to provide a hardship waiver to exempt Americans who cannot afford it. In addition, while I believe that employers have a responsibility to support health insurance for their employees, small businesses face a number of special challenges in affording health benefits and should be exempted.

By Ben Smith 07:51 PM