

# Our government at work

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

January 22, 2010

With the Republican [pickup](#) of Ted Kennedy's old Senate seat, health insurance reform is [on the ropes](#). [Numerous experts and commentators agree that](#) since the Senate Democrats no longer have the votes to pass a revised bill, the way forward is for the House to pass the existing (underwhelming) Senate bill as is—and then improve it via the budget reconciliation process, which doesn't require filibuster-proof supermajorities. (Ron Pollack has [advocated](#) doing this in reverse order.) But House Democrats [might not have](#) the votes to make this happen, because of [trouble](#) from both the [right](#) and [left](#) wings of the caucus.

In short, although the country's left-leaning major party has control of the White House and large majorities in both houses of Congress, it might not be enough to pass a moderate, common-sense bill—a bill [full of ideas](#) that right-of-center folks used to support, a bill that represents [compromise after compromise](#) by liberals.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court's conservative bloc used its one-vote majority to [roll back campaign finance reform](#) by reducing restrictions on political donations from corporations and unions. Steve Woolley [speaks for](#) the moral outrage many are feeling, while fellow [CCblogger](#) David Lewicki [highlights](#) a root philosophical problem: the alleged personhood of corporations.

James Fallows [points out](#) the not-so-delicious irony: “In the least accountable branch of government, the narrowest margin prevails; in our elected legislative branch, substantial majorities are neutered.”