

After a year of ignoring Republican views while crafting his controversial health care reform proposal at times in secret, President Obama is now calling for a bipartisan health care summit on February 25, 2010. He is finally asking Republicans to participate in the health care discussion.

While the president appears to acknowledge that he cannot pass a health care reform bill without the consent of the majority of the American people who continue to oppose his plan, many are questioning his sincerity – as do I.

What's particularly galling is the White House has gone out of its way for the last year to effectively shut out any and all opposing views to its radical government takeover of health care. Going as far back as last May, congressional Republicans asked the president to hold bipartisan talks about health care reform and he refused to listen.

As the president and his supporters in Congress attempted to ramrod their big government health care bills through both Houses, the American people revolted in town halls last summer and by shifting the balance of power in the Senate. What's more, legislation allowing states to "opt out" of participating in the onerous mandates of "Obama-care" has been introduced in 36 states.

House Republican Leader Rep. John Boehner (OH) and House Republican Whip Eric Cantor (VA) have responded to the president's invitation with a list of questions. Chief among them: will the president agree to start over on health care, rather than attempt to preserve elements of his plan that the American people have strongly rejected? Reportedly, the president has already said he would not "reset" the health care debate.

Furthermore, conservatives want to know if the president will make his health care proposal available to Congress and the American people 72 hours beforehand? And will the president also invite state officials, including those who have voiced objections to mandatory health care, to participate in the health care summit?

Let's be clear, we need to address health care cost and access, and I join my Republican colleagues in supporting our plan to reform the system without imposing government mandates or limiting choice.

I believe we can fix what's broken without breaking what's working, but the president needs to realize he cannot dictate the terms of a health care reform debate or a final bill. The American people and conservatives in Congress will not allow it.

Historic Snow Shuts Down Nation's Capital:

Last week Washington, DC was literally buried under more than three feet of snow after two successive major winter storms assaulted the nation's capital, paralyzing transportation and effectively shutting down non-emergency operations of the federal government.

It might sound odd to many in South Alabama that a city as far north as Washington, DC and

the seat of our country could be so immobilized by a pair of winter storms. After five or more inches of snow accumulate on DC area roads, it's not uncommon for local schools to close and for people to scurry in dread to their local grocery stores for provisions.

But to be fair, an enormous 55 inches of snow have already fallen on Washington, DC this winter - the largest since they began keeping records over 120 years ago.

In response to the record snowfall, the federal government took the unusual step of closing down DC offices for four days in a row last week, and Congress cancelled all votes.

At the height of the blizzard, my Capitol Hill office was closed for one day to ensure the safety of my DC-based staff, while my Alabama offices remained open to take your calls as usual.

I appreciate your patience and hope Washington has seen the last of "global warming."

Congressman John Murtha:

Also last week, long-time Pennsylvania Congressman John "Jack" Murtha passed away. The 19-term Democrat was the powerful chair of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee which oversees hundreds of billions of dollars in the annual Pentagon budget.

Jack Murtha visited Mobile in January of 2009, to weigh in on the on-going U.S. Air Force aerial tanker replacement process. He favored a fair competition, voicing support for a dual contract award between the two competitors – Northrop Grumman-EADS and Boeing.

Sometimes flamboyant, sometimes controversial, Congressman Jack Murtha - a Marine and the first Vietnam War veteran elected to Congress - was always a strong supporter of our military.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721 or visit my website at <http://bonner.house.gov>