

Four months ago, as the House was preparing for a long-awaited weekend vote on the Democrat health care bill, I wrote a column explaining why I would be voting against that flawed legislation.

Fast forward to late March 2010, and again, I am writing just before the House is again expected to take up a controversial health care bill in another weekend session. This time, Speaker Pelosi has promised to raise the stakes by using a parliamentary procedure to pass the Senate health care bill without actually holding a vote on the health care bill itself.

Terms like "reconciliation" and "deem and pass" have been tossed around in the news for weeks, further puzzling Americans already struggling to keep up with the political nuances of the Washington health care debate.

The election of Massachusetts Republican Senator Scott Brown in January was thought to have signaled a shift in the health care momentum, depriving the Democrats of their 60 vote supermajority in the Senate.

In response, Majority Leader Harry Reid trotted out a legislative tactic called reconciliation to allow passage of a final health care bill with a simple 51 vote majority.

Not taking any chances in the House, where lawmakers have been increasingly reluctant to embrace the reconciliation strategy and vote for the Senate health care bill, Speaker Pelosi has matched Reid's parliamentary trick with one of her own – "deem and pass." This maneuver would allow the passage of the Senate health care bill without a direct up or down vote. Instead, the Senate health care bill could be approved when the House votes to pass a "rule" governing debate.

Article 1, Section 7, Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution states that bills passed by Congress should receive a vote: "Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States... But in all such cases the votes of both Houses shall be determined by yeas and nays, and the names of the persons voting for and against the Bill shall be entered on the Journal of each House respectively."

Democrats, who command strong majorities in both houses of Congress, are resorting to such desperate means to pass their health care plan because they have no mandate from the American people. Speaker Pelosi stated we need to pass the health care bill "so we can see what's in it." The American people are justifiably outraged at such arrogance.

During my lifetime, I cannot recall a time when our federal government has been so determined to defy the will of the people in order to expand its authority and control over our lives.

All this past week, my office phones have been ringing off the hook with Alabama callers demanding the House defeat this power grab.

I adamantly oppose Speaker Pelosi's overreaching health care bill as well as her tactics to

avoid a direct vote.

I will cast my vote against any House rule which sets the stage for the passage of the Senate health care bill, as well as any attempt to pass such a bill via the reconciliation process.

Challenging NOAA's Red Snapper Limits:

If Americans are wary of their government taking a greater role in their personal medical decisions, our Gulf Coast fishermen already know first hand how Washington can do more harm than good.

Local fishermen, and just about anyone who wets a hook off the Alabama coast, can tell you that our Gulf red snapper population has experienced an explosion in recent years. Red snapper are larger and more abundant. Yet, the federal agency that oversees our fisheries is stubbornly refusing to update its draconian red snapper fishing limits.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has reduced local red snapper catches to two fish a day and now may cut the length of the annual Gulf red snapper fishing season from 60 to 51 days. Fishermen are livid, and with good reason. NOAA is ignoring data that show red snapper are more plentiful.

Last week, I questioned NOAA's administrator, Dr. Jane Lubchenco, during a House subcommittee hearing on the agency's budget. I asked her why NOAA is not playing fair with our local fishermen and why her agency has so far ignored language I authored in a bill passed last December calling on NOAA to use independent data to determine local red snapper populations.

I made clear to Dr. Lubchenco that NOAA's decisions have direct consequences on the livelihoods of many thousands of local fishermen, their families and our coastal communities. NOAA bureaucrats are not above the reach of Congress and I am committed to do all I can to hold them accountable.

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.