

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nevada, is pledging to play Santa to the supporters of big government health care by passing a health care bill on or before December 25.

As the U.S. House adjourned on December 16, the Senate was still trying to find a way to hammer out a health care bill that would get the necessary 60 votes to end debate and pass.

The Senate dropped its version of a "public option" and has reportedly agreed to compromise language barring federal funds to pay for abortions. Mr. Reid's plan is to force through a basic framework health care bill that will keep the process moving.

This strategy of passing anything in order to keep the big government health care drive alive will place even more pressure on the House and Senate to merge the two bills and approve a final version before the president's State of the Union address.

There are many unknowns, but talk coming from the administration adds to the belief that no matter what is ultimately passed out of Congress, it will serve as the foundation for a big government takeover of health care.

I voted against Speaker Nancy Pelosi's \$1 trillion health care bill which barely passed the House on November 7, 2009. I remain opposed to heaping more costly government mandates on small business, foisting hundreds of billions in new taxes on employers, and imposing penalties on the public for not buying insurance coverage.

I am opposed to the planned \$500 billion cuts to Medicare over ten years that could result in the loss of benefits, including Medicare Advantage, to some seniors. I am also opposed to anything that would restrict a patient's choice of medical plans, treatment and doctors.

The American people don't want these so-called reforms. They want Congress to slow down and get it right. Americans' health care is simply too important to be subjected to a rushed process designed to advance a political agenda, rather than enhance the quality and availability of medical care.

It's still not too late for Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Reid to embrace the health care reform alternative put forward by House Republicans.

Our bill would lower costs and increase access through long-needed changes, including, ending medical lawsuit abuse, allowing small businesses to pool together to get better insurance coverage and rates, permit individuals to buy insurance across state lines, and prevent insurers from cancelling a policy or imposing annual or lifetime spending caps.

Guantanamo, Illinois

As we near the one year anniversary of the Obama administration, we are reminded of one of the most controversial decisions made by the new president.

On his second day in office, he announced that he would close the U.S. military-run terrorist detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba within a year. While the president has not yet made

good on his promise to shut down the facility, he recently made significant headway.

On December 15, 2009, the administration announced it would acquire the state prison in Thomson, Illinois – turning it into a federal prison to house up to 100 terror detainees. Interestingly, the administration is trying to sell the terrorists' arrival as a kind of stimulus program. Potentially, thousands of local jobs could be created in order to staff this new Guantanamo in Illinois.

I oppose this move for the same reasons I opposed the administration's November decision to bring the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks to New York to face a criminal trial. This move will undermine the security of America.

For starters, by placing these terrorists in the United States, we are providing a potential target for future terrorist attacks. The people of Thomson, Illinois would suddenly and unwillingly be thrust into a high risk environment.

Secondly, foreign terror detainees held in the United States could be entitled to more legal protections than those detained abroad.

As we have already been made aware in the 9/11 plotters' trial, this administration seems to have no problem with affording terrorists Constitutional protections. Allowing terrorists to gain such rights will compromise our intelligence gathering methods and sources – jeopardizing our efforts to locate and stop terrorists in the first place.

I am a cosponsor of HR 2294 – the Keeping Terrorists Out of America Act – which would require Congress and local governments to pre-approve the transfer of terror detainees to U.S. soil. Americans' safety should always come first.

Happy New Year

And with this final column of 2009, I would like to take this opportunity to wish each of you a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2010.

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.