

Health-care reform: How the proposals stack up

With the Senate about to pass its health-care bill, several contentious differences remain between its version and the House bill. The Senate is expected to prevail on jettisoning the “public option,” leaving House Democrats hopeful they will win on other points, including efforts to make coverage more affordable.

Key provisions

HOUSE BILL

SENATE BILL

Government-run insurance

YES. Creates a **public** insurance option. Providers would negotiate reimbursement rates with the **government**.

NO. Instead of a public option, the final bill would allow **private** firms for the first time to offer **national insurance policies** to all Americans across state lines. Those plans would be negotiated through the Office of Personnel Management, the same agency that handles health coverage for federal workers and members of Congress.

Employer mandate

YES. Employers must pay **65 percent** of family premiums or pay a penalty based on payroll. Small businesses with less than \$500,000 in payroll are exempt.

NO. Does not require employers to offer health insurance. However, if even one employee of a firm with more than 50 employees receives a subsidy through the new exchanges, the firm would face a fine equal to **\$750 for every person on its payroll**.

Exchanges

YES. Sets up a **single nationwide exchange**, in which people without employer-based coverage will buy insurance.

YES. Sets up **50 exchanges**, administered by the states.

Abortion restrictions

YES. Bans abortion from being covered in the public option or in any of the exchange’s private plans that take subsidized customers, who will make up 85 percent of the exchange. The exchange can offer separate “riders” for abortion coverage.

YES. The new insurance exchanges can offer plans that cover abortion, but people who choose those plans must pay for their coverage with separate checks — one for abortion coverage, one for the rest of their health-care services.

Medicaid expansion

YES. Medicaid expanded to cover households earning less than **150 percent** of the federal poverty level, or \$33,075 for a family of four.

YES. Medicaid expanded to cover everyone earning less than **133 percent** of the federal poverty level, or \$29,327 for a family of four.

How it's paid for

Would be financed through **billions in Medicare cuts and new taxes**, including a surcharge on taxpayers who earn more than \$500,000 a year, or \$1 million a year for families.

Would also be financed through billions in Medicare cuts and new taxes, including an excise tax on insurance plans that are worth more than \$23,000 for a family of four. Couples making more than \$250,000 would pay additional Medicare taxes.

Medicare costs

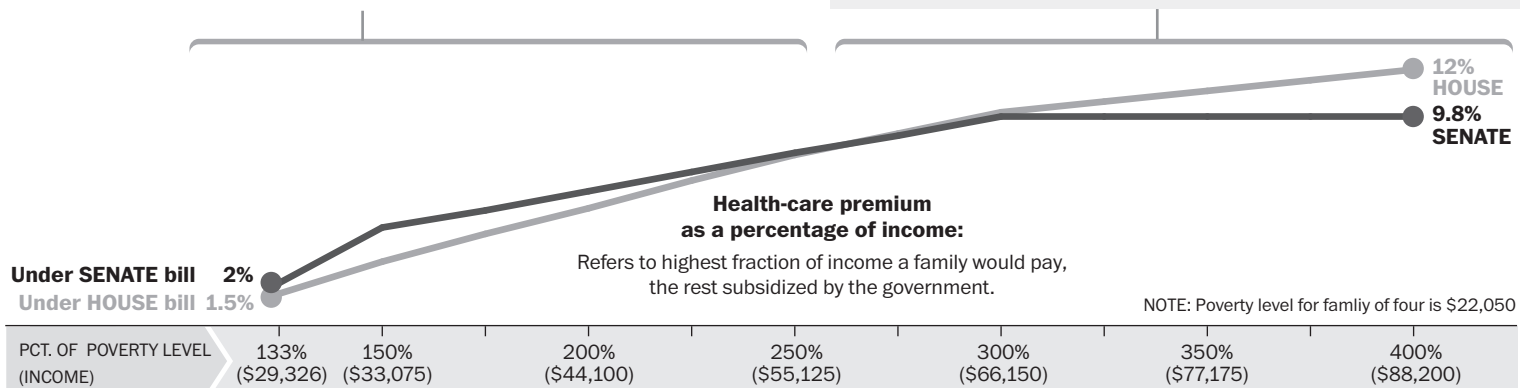
No new independent Medicare commission, leaving it to Congress and the existing advisory panel to set rates.

Creates a new independent commission to set policies and rates for Medicare.

Subsidies

YES. Subsidies are more generous than in the Senate bill at the **lower end of the income ladder**, with families paying a smaller percentage of their income.

YES. Subsidies are more generous than in the House bill for families making **250 percent to 400 percent of the poverty level**, with families paying a smaller percentage of their income.



SOURCE: Staff reports, Congressional Budget Office, AP, U.S. Senate, familiesusa.org

ALEC MacGILLIS, KAREN YOURISH AND LAURA STANTON/THE WASHINGTON POST