

THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



A monthly column to inform ABC members about national and local issues impacting Maine's construction industry.

Jan. 2010



ABC's 2010 Chairman - Doug Newman of Newman Concrete Services in Richmond.

I had this month's *Chairman's Corner* all written. It was Alamo-time for health care reform and our prospects weren't looking good as ABC members prepared for the final wave. Under siege, we had time for one last counter-attack.

Because the media wasn't reporting on the real, dollars and cents impact of health care reform, we

created an ObamaCare Cost Calculator that could demonstrate how much Maine's individual businesses would be facing in new costs—tens, even hundreds of thousands of dollars per company. We re-energized the coalition we call **Maine Small Businesses for Responsible Health Care Reform**. We lined up dozens of business groups and their members for a press conference to announce our findings—our final stand.

But just as we prepared to engage, the cavalry arrived from, of all places, Massachusetts. The impossible had happened. Republican Scott Brown was elected to the safest democrat Senate seat in the nation—a seat held by a member of the Kennedy family for more than half a century. As we looked out from our fortifications the morning of January 20th we saw our opposition in disarray and in full retreat from health care reform. We had somehow survived and the country was saved from a monstrosity bad bill—for now, at least.

So as I happily sit down to write a new *Chairman's Corner*, let's take a look back, and then to what is ahead. Scott Brown's victory was significant, not because it gives Republicans a 41st vote to sustain a Senate filibuster and slow down the majority steamroller, but because it is a clear referendum on health care reform.

Democrats may be able to overcome the numbers, but they know they cannot ignore the polls anymore. Polls have consistently shown that health care reforms as constructed by Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid were very unpopular. If Ted Kennedy's seat isn't safe then no one's seat is safe.

Health care reform was unpopular because it was trying to solve the wrong health care crisis.

The authors of health care reform were solely focused on providing coverage to the 2% of America's population that doesn't currently have health care insurance. To accomplish this, they proposed 2,500 pages of social engineering that would radically transform the health care system for all of us. The hastily constructed bill was fraught with unintended consequences and side deals. Worst of all, it increased costs for those who already pay for insurance.

Our friends in Massachusetts, and all Americans, were right to revolt.

All of us are concerned about the number of

uninsured but the biggest crisis most of us face is not becoming one of them. The vast majority of Americans are happy with our health care system – they just need it to cost less. The first

priority of health care reform must be to control cost. It doesn't do any good to add new people to the insurance rolls if costs go up for everyone else, forcing even more to drop off. Only after costs are stabilized can we tackle the problem of achieving universal coverage.

Universal coverage is important. Beyond the obvious humanitarian justifications, universal coverage can help control costs even further - if it is done the right way. People without insurance don't pay anything into the system but are guaranteed care that the rest of us end up paying for. If insurance can be made affordable for all, it benefits all of us.

ABC will continue to advocate for the right kind of health care reform. We will work with our representatives in Washington to identify ways to control health insurance costs and get more of the uninsured covered.

The next time our representatives in Congress are asked to cast a vote on the issue of health care reform, ABC members want to be able to encourage them to vote "Yes."

**Doug Newman, Chairman - ABC Board of Directors
Newman Concrete Services, Inc.**

The vast majority of Americans are happy with our health care system – they just need it to cost less.