

Idaho Statesman, Saturday, Nov. 7, 2009 – by Erika Bolstad

## **Minnick, Simpson to vote no on health bill**

*House measure will include a public option provision, which both congressmen oppose.*

WASHINGTON - A no vote comes as no surprise from Rep. Mike Simpson, who shares other Republicans' opposition. But Democratic Rep. Walt Minnick's vote was highly sought by House Democratic leaders.

"It's a very difficult vote for me, because I really want to vote for health care reform, but it has to be done right," Minnick told the Idaho Statesman on Friday.

All the top House Democrats have spoken to him about his vote, he said. Democrats are scrambling to pull together the 218 votes they need to pass the bill. They hold 258 seats, but conservative Blue Dog Democrats like Minnick have proved difficult to corral.

Some other Democrats, too, have raised concerns about aspects of the legislation, including whether it allows illegal immigrants access to insurance coverage. Democrats cleared one impasse Friday night, saying abortion opponents will be given a chance to insert tougher abortion restrictions into the legislation during Saturday's debate.

The 10-year, \$1.2 trillion House version would extend health insurance coverage to 36 million people. The bill would create a government-run health insurance plan - the so-called public option - that would compete with private insurers. It would prohibit insurers from denying coverage because of pre-existing conditions, and it would set up a marketplace - known as an exchange - to let consumers shop for coverage.

Both Simpson and Minnick have long said they won't vote for a bill that includes a public option. Minnick said Friday that he also is concerned the bill doesn't do enough to control costs.

But Minnick said Friday he hopes that the Senate version of the bill, which is considered more moderate, will be combined with the House version in a way he can support.

A vote is expected on Saturday - after President Barack Obama makes a late morning trip to the Capitol to make one final pitch for the legislation.