

BLUE DOG PAC STARVES DURING PUBLIC OPTION FIGHT

This is interesting. Funding for the Blue Dog's PAC (as distinct from Blue Dogs themselves) has dried up even as Blue Dogs have attempted to gut health care reform.

Our analysis of the fiscally conservative and increasingly influential Blue Dog Coalition and its funding noted that the group's political action committee had averaged more than \$176,000 in receipts from other PACs over the first half of 2009. Their monthly haul dropped to a surprisingly low \$27,000 in July, rebounded somewhat in August, and but then dropped again to just \$12,500 in September.

[snip]

After raising \$1.1 million from January to June, the committee raised less than \$87,000 between July and September – less than it brought in during any one of the preceding five months. And in just three months, the Blue Dog PAC's monthly fundraising average dropped by more than \$50,000 – probably not the sort of fiscal conservatism the 52-member coalition was hoping for.

Now, that's the **group's** PAC. Individual members seem to be doing just fine. For example, here are some August and September donations to Allen Boyd, who remains opposed to the public option.

- American College of Radiology PAC, \$4,500
- American Dental Association PAC, \$2,500
- American Osteopathic PAC,

\$2,500

- SmithKlineBeecham, \$3,500

(Interestingly, Amgen took back \$1,000 from Boyd during this period.)

And here's some PAC donations to Mike Ross.

- American Medical Association, \$1,000
- American Medical Group, \$1,500
- American Optometric Association PAC, \$2,000
- American Society of Health System Pharmacists, \$1,500
- Assurant, \$1,500
- Fresenius Medical Care, \$2,500
- Healthcare Distribution Management, \$2,500
- RiteAid, \$2,500

Both of these men, at least, are still getting a chunk of change from health care companies, even while the Blue Dog PAC is getting nothing.

Obviously, this is not just about health care—Blue Dogs suck at the teat of a range of onerous business interests. But at a time when Blue Dogs might be exercising maximum influence, they're not getting any return as a group. I wonder if that stems from a lack of leadership as a block—particularly Stephanie Herseth Sandlin's repeated embarrassment as Raul Grijalva repeatedly out-whipped her on the public option.

"Yes, I think there's momentum," said Blue Dog leader Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-S.D.). "They don't have the votes for a public option with Medicare rates."

But Grijalva noted that 46 members

recently signed a letter pledging to vote against the centrist plan. In the numbers game of the House, that is significant, because Republicans are expected to unite against the healthcare bill. So if 39 Democrats oppose the plan, it wouldn't get the 218 votes needed to pass. There are 52 Blue Dogs, as well as many other centrist members not in the coalition.

"With negotiated rates, you lose votes on the left," Herseth Sandlin said. "I don't know that either public option can get 218 votes."

Not to mention by Herseth Sandlin's own squishiness on the public option?

Obviously, this is just two or three months data. But it raises the possibility that the Blue Dogs, as a block, are losing some of their clout.