



# DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE **FACT SHEET**

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## **Democrats Continue to Fight to Pass a Real *Patients' Bill of Rights***

- Recent polls have suggested to Republicans that a *Patients' Bill of Rights* – long championed by Democrats – is a top priority for the American people. In response, Republicans have adopted a strategy that uses rhetoric to blur the lines between Democrats and Republicans on passage of a meaningful *Patients' Bill of Rights*.
- Democrats know there are few gray areas when it comes to the positions of Democrats and Republicans on comprehensive and enforceable patient protections for all Americans. Indeed, the differences are black and white: Democrats have fought for immediate passage of a real *Patients' Bill of Rights*, only to have their efforts repeatedly blocked by Republicans.
- Democrats introduced a strong, enforceable *Patients' Bill of Rights* more than two years ago. Although the Senate came within one vote of passing the Norwood-Dingell legislation, the House actually did pass the bill almost a year ago on October 7, 1999. Since that time, no real progress has been made.
- In fact, the Senate has taken several steps backward, voting recently by a narrow margin of 51-47, in support of a Nickles amendment that not only weakens the Norwood-Dingell legislation, but would reverse advances recently made by states and the courts toward upholding the rights of patients.

Democratic Policy Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510-7050  
Byron Dorgan, Chairman

- The Nickles amendment does not cover all privately insured Americans and provides a series of hollow, cosmetic measures that would leave insurers and HMOs in charge of medical decisions.
- Whereas all 161 million privately insured Americans are covered by the Norwood-Dingell bill, the Nickles amendment leaves more than 100 million privately insured Americans – more than 2/3 of the total – uncovered by most of the substantive provisions of the bill.
- A letter from Representative Greg Ganske, a Republican dentist and an original sponsor of the Norwood-Dingell bill, states the following about the Nickles amendment:

“This Senate legislation eliminates virtually any meaningful remedy for most working Americans and their families against death and injury caused by HMOs.”
- Moreover, a legal analysis of the Nickles amendment done by three law professors from Rutgers University and George Washington University law schools, states:

“....Congressional passage of the Senate bill (the Nickles amendment) would be worse than were Congress to enact no measure at all.”
- The American public doesn't want the Nickles amendment, and they don't want Congressional inaction. They want a real *Patients' Bill of Rights*, and Democrats will not give up until the Norwood-Dingell bill becomes law. The American people deserve nothing less.