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Reid Bidding Up Votes for Obamacare

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada is doing this week what he always does when he needs votes to pass a bill that President Obama favors but that the public opposes. Reid goes behind closed doors to cut deals and buys senators' votes. For example, to get to the 60 votes needed to pass the motion to proceed to debate Obamacare, Reid came up with arcane legislative language that netted \$300 million in federal assistance tailored for Louisiana. That sweetener temporarily bought Reid custody of Sen. Mary Landrieu's vote, but she quickly made it clear that he will have to raise the ante to get her vote for final passage. That is business as usual on the road to Obamacare.

This week, Reid goes back behind closed doors in search of more deals in the quest for final passage of the Senate version of Obamacare. Reid's problem is twofold: First, a handful of Senate Democrats say they unalterably oppose something in the bill, but going too far in satisfying them risks alienating other Senate Democrats who unalterably favor whatever it is they oppose. The logical assumption is that Reid prefers to operate behind closed doors because he doesn't want the public to see the ugly reality behind Senate Democrats' support for Obamacare. Or maybe he just prefers the world not see him pull his hair out as one proposed vote-buying deal after another falls through.

Second, public opposition grows as this Obamacare vote-buying process drags on and people know more about the bill. The latest data from Gallup finds more respondents saying they would advise their congressman to vote against Obamacare than saying they would encourage a vote for it, 49-44 percent. Obamacare support has been declining among Republicans, Democrats and independents, according to Gallup, "falling by 6 points among Democrats, 8 among independents, and 12 among Republicans." That data was produced between Nov. 20 and 22, meaning the heavy lobbying earlier in the month by the White House and its special interest allies like AARP and the AMA made no dent in public opposition.

Reid's frantic vote buying only fuels this growing opposition as his numerous deals are exposed. As the National Center for Policy Analysis's John Goodman points out, it didn't have to be this way. This unsavory vote-buying spectacle became inevitable at the outset when Obama, Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ignored Republicans in crafting health care reform. That made every potential recalcitrant Democrat's vote ever more valuable. Just ask the \$300-million lady from Louisiana.