

A Physician on Capitol Hill: An Outsider on the Inside

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It was early evening on December 23, 2009, when I raced across an underground tunnel in the US Capitol complex. It was dimly lit and quiet. Most staffers on Capitol Hill had already left for the holidays; only a few of the senator's advisors remained. They, like I, had stayed to watch history unfold. I returned to the office and joined the others as they watched the TV announcer report what I had just witnessed on the Senate floor.

After several intense months of debate and endless work, I had sat only feet away in the gallery as the senator cast the second of 3 historic votes. Now we waited for her to return, eager for her to share her experience. Procedural rules delayed the third vote until the next morning, but at this point, no one doubted the outcome: the US Senate would pass their version of the health care reform legislation. Just months earlier, I had been a resident at a large children's hospital; now on the eve of this historic event, I was part of a US senator's staff. How did I get here?

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