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Committee Investigation Outlines White House's Role in Backroom Health Care Negotiations

*Internal Emails Reveal Top Administration Officials Were Behind Deal with Pharmaceutical Industry*

May 16, 2012

**WASHINGTON, DC** – The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, chaired by Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-FL), today released new information that confirms the White House played a pivotal role in cutting a “ deal” with the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), the details of which have never been fully disclosed to the public. The latest revelations come as part of an ongoing investigation launched more than a year ago to allow Congress and the American public to understand the process that was used to write legislation that fundamentally transformed the nation's health care system.

In 2008, then-candidate Barack Obama repeatedly made promises to usher in an era of transparency, “ put an end to the game playing,” and broadcast health care negotiations on C-SPAN. However, in 2009, a series of conflicting media accounts documented efforts by the authors of the health care law to make an agreement or series of agreements with health care industry stakeholders to squelch opposition and generate support for the legislation. These meetings and negotiations with various outside interest groups were never made public, and many members of Congress – from both parties – were not a part of those negotiations. Since those reports lacked consistency and concrete details, the committee launched an investigation on February 18, 2011, to determine whether “ deals” were made, who made them, and what specifically was negotiated.

Today, a [staff memo](http://energycommerce.house.gov/media/file/pdfs/20120516Obamacaredeals.pdf) (<http://energycommerce.house.gov/media/file/pdfs/20120516Obamacaredeals.pdf>) distributed to Republican members of the committee provided further information regarding

the development of the “ deal,” and the parties involved in negotiating specific policy outcomes to secure support for the legislation. Based on email exchanges and other primary source material, it appears the deal was reached not solely between PhRMA and the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, but that top personnel in the White House were involved in negotiating and approving this deal. The committee’ s investigation determined that the White House, specifically Office of Health Reform Director Nancy Ann DeParle, Deputy Chief of Staff Jim Messina, and Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel, actively engaged in these negotiations while the role of Congress was limited. Their involvement in these previously undisclosed negotiations is particularly noteworthy since it contradicts the president’ s promises of transparency.

While news reports speculated on the details of the “ deal,” the White House has been vague and contradictory about the specifics beyond the \$80 billion threshold. In the coming weeks, the committee will show what the White House agreed to do as part of its deal with the pharmaceutical industry, and how the full details of this agreement were kept from both the public and the House of Representatives.

And as the memo highlights, the important question to be answered is what the White House got in return.