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Gephardt on this weekend's "Iowa Press"

November 20, 2009 by [O.Kay Henderson](#) · [Leave a Comment](#)

Former Missouri Congressman Richard Gephardt is the guest on this weekend's edition of "Iowa Press." [Here's the Radio Iowa story](#), about his appearance today at a forum in Des Moines to talk about the work of the [Council for American Medical Innovation](#). As you may remember, Gephardt won the 1988 Iowa Democratic Party Caucuses and finished fourth in the 2004 Iowa Caucuses and he campaigned here in 2007 on behalf of Hillary Clinton's candidacy, so he is a well-known figure in Iowa.

During the taping of the IPTV program (which airs tonight at 7:30), Gephardt talked about his reaction when the U.S. House passed a health care reform package earlier this month:

"I was elated. In fact, I called Speaker Pelosi and Stenny Hoyer and Jim Clyburn, the whip, and I congratulated them and I was thrilled that they were able to get this done and being in that spot 20 years ago and seeing failure, I know how hard this is to do and let me tell you the leaders and the members who got this done did a magnificent job on a very tough set of issues."

Gephardt also offered his prediction of "if" and "when" a final bill may land on President Obama's desk.

"I'm optimistic that it will. It may be early next year, but I think in this period of time, it will be done. In 1993 when I was the leader in the House, with the Clinton health care plan, I couldn't get it out of committee, so the House has now passed a bill and the Senate is trying to pass. If they can do that by the end of the year I think they can get a conference together and come up with a bill."

"And I think the president has done a really good job of, you know, staying out of congress' way, giving them general direction, not being highly specific and also getting some of the big stakeholders like the doctors, like the hospitals, like the pharmaceutical companies to be supporters this time when last time they were all against it."

Next, here's a transcript of the portion of the program in which Gephardt addressed some of the criticism leveled at him for his work in the private sector.

Mike Glover of The Associated Press: *"Congressman, since you left congress you've become something of a Washington insider, done a lot of lobbying in congress and there are those who are critical of some of the clients you've represented. You've signed up PhRMA chemicals, some other clients, anti-labor clients. How do you respond to those criticisms?"*

Gephardt: *"First of all, the criticisms are not all are accurate. I have been working in government relations. I have taken on clients to help them with their efforts. I don't take on anyone who is anti-labor, I can tell you that. That's not accurate. But I try to get involved in the same kind of issues I was involved in when I was in congress."*

"Health care reform — I'm a big advocate of this bill that's working it's way through congress, partly because when I was leader I couldn't get it done and I'm excited, now, that maybe they can get it done. Global warming — I work for some of the energy companies, energy industry in St. Louis — Ameren and UE. They've got problems complying, but they're for our climate change legislation and so I'm helping them assert their beliefs, their issues, in that context."

Glover: *"Specifically, regarding your representation of PhRMA. How do you depend representing that company?"*

Gephardt: *"I think having good pharmaceutical answers to big problems like Alzheimers and cancer is really what we need to do. The pharmaceutical companies aren't right on every issue, but they're right on a lot of issues and the ones that I've dealt with are really interested in innovation. They want to find answers, faster, for big disease problems and I think that's a very positive thing."*

Henderson: *"Another flash point for some Democrats is your representation of UnitedHealthcare. How do you respond to Democrats who are critical of that?"*

Gephardt: *"Well, any company has its critics. I think UnitedHealthcare delivers really good service in many places in the country. No one is perfect. No one does everything exactly right every day, but the organization of health care is one of our greatest needs. Health care is a cottage industry that claims 16 percent of GNP and most observers believe that if it can be organized better through companies like Kaiser, UnitedHealthcare and others, that's really a step in the right direction."*

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