

## In Case You Missed It: “White House Caught In Dem Crossfire”

From [Politico](#)

By Glenn Thrush, Jake Sherman and Lisa Lerer  
Friday, January 22, 2010

“Congressional Democrats — stunned out of silence by Scott Brown’s victory in Massachusetts — say they’re done swallowing their anger with President Barack Obama and ready to go public with their gripes.

“If the sentiment isn’t quite heads-must-roll, it’s getting there.

“Hill Democrats are demanding that Obama’s brain trust — especially senior adviser David Axelrod and chief of staff Rahm Emanuel — shelve their grand legislative ambitions ...

“‘The administration has got to be in the forefront now, instead of throwing some meat on the track and seeing what the House can work out,’ said New Jersey Rep. Bill Pascrell ...

“‘What happened was they got so caught up in all these other issues like health care and cap and trade and all this other stuff, that because of that they maybe didn’t put enough focus on the economy,’ said Minnesota Rep. Collin Peterson ...

“Emanuel, for his part, is now pushing for a stripped-down health care bill that could be passed within a few weeks ...

“That may mollify some Democratic moderates, but it will further infuriate the liberals, who insist that the lesson of Massachusetts is that Obama has come on too weak, not too strong. New York Times columnist Paul Krugman captured the left’s winter of discontent Thursday with a blog post in which he wrote that he’s ‘pretty close to giving up on Mr. Obama ...’

“But more than anything else, there’s a sense that the party’s greatest communicator isn’t conveying to voters that he understands their worries about the economy.

“And that could swamp all Democratic boats, even those carrying incumbents who previously felt they were secure ...

“The problem, from the perspective of the White House, is that fractious Democrats provide all the political direction of a nine-needed compass ...

“In the House alone, there are nearly as many Democratic positions on health care as there are Democrats, with liberals goading Obama to double-down on reform and ram through a bill using the Senate’s controversial 51-vote ‘reconciliation’ process.

“Moderates, embodied by Indiana Sen. Evan Bayh, a fiscal hawk, and New York Rep. Eliot Engel, are urging Obama to dispense with the issue as soon as possible before he marches the party off a cliff.

“‘I think that an effective majority is one that advocates and listens,’ Engel said. ‘I’ve done a lot of advocating; now I’m listening. If the people say, ‘Wait, slow down, you’re going a little bit too fast,’ then we need to slow down ...’

“On the day after Brown’s win, panicky House Democrats convened in the Capitol to discuss post-Massachusetts strategy, with some in attendance complaining about what they believed to be continued White House disengagement.

“We all pretty much knew for sure we were going to lose Massachusetts,’ one person in attendance told POLITICO on Wednesday. ‘And yet, last night and this morning, we had absolutely no message guidance from the White House, [the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee] or [the Democratic National Committee]. There was no leadership ...’

“House Democrats, already terrified by the wholesale defection of independents to the GOP in Massachusetts, were infuriated when a New York Times article, apparently citing an administration source, suggested Speaker Nancy Pelosi could pass an unamended version of the Senate’s health reform bill.

“The sense was that the Obama folks were trying to say it was inevitable when it wasn’t,’ said New York Rep. Anthony Weiner ...

“It wasn’t that they were bullying us, but it reinforced the idea that they were a little tone-deaf to what the reality inside the House and Senate really were,’ Weiner added.”

To View The Entire Article, Please Visit: <http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=53AD2458-18FE-70B2-A885A10F101116D6>