

Obama's collaboration with Big Pharma exposed

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In order to secure his sweeping 2010 health care reforms, US President Barack Obama's staff oversaw an unusually close collaboration with the pharmaceutical industry, documents show.

Republicans in the House of Representatives have uncovered a trove of emails and other memos showing how the Obama administration coordinated its \$150 million advertising campaign with major pharmaceutical companies.

Nearly \$70 million was spent through two Super PACs -- political action committees -- organized in part by [White House](#) officials, including Jim Messina, Obama's former deputy chief of staff who is now managing his 2012 [reelection campaign](#).

Memos released Friday by the House Energy and Commerce Committee revealed the close links between the Obama administration and the [Pharmaceutical Research](#) and Manufacturers of America, also known as PhRMA.

The release comes as the Supreme Court is poised to decide on the constitutionality of Obama's health reforms, just months ahead of a November 6 general election in which Republicans hope to take back the White House.

The 2010 [Affordable Care](#) Act is considered Obama's signature first term achievement, but opponents argue that it overreaches government

power by requiring all Americans to purchase health insurance.

Democratic consultants working with the White House on [health reform](#) asked to meet backers of the law "to discuss our ad campaign," Ron Pollack, executive director of the Families USA [consumer group](#), said in a June 2009 e-mail to PhRMA.

"As I mentioned previously, I wanted to get some guidance from the White House about their messaging and how our effort can be consistent with that," Pollack wrote.

The email was among materials compiled by the House Energy and Commerce Committee as part of a probe to determine how the White House interacted with the drug industry as the health reform legislation took shape.

The panel said the emails confirmed that a decision by PhRMA to fund advertisements was "linked to policy agreements backed by the administration."

The White House, meanwhile, underscored that Obama was clear from the start that he would talk to all stakeholders, including the pharmaceutical industry, in order to pass the reform.

"He understood correctly that the unwillingness to work with people on both sides of the issue was one of the reasons why it took a century to pass health reform," White House communications director Dan Pfeiffer told The New York Times.

Supporters of Obama's health reforms say that without the individual mandate, it would be impossible to insure an extra 32 million Americans who currently lack coverage.

Republicans have vowed to repeal reforms that are loathed by their base and painted as government overreach.

If the Supreme Court upholds the law and Obama wins reelection in November, the legislation will likely stand for years, as it will be fully implemented by 2014, two years before his second term draws to a close.

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