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Approaching dysfunctional government

by Thomas C. Fox

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"Unless some legislator pulls off a last-minute double-cross, health care reform will pass the Senate this week. Count me among those who consider this an awesome achievement. It's a seriously flawed bill, we'll spend years if not decades fixing it, but it's nonetheless a huge step forward.

It was, however, a close-run thing. And the fact that it was such a close thing shows that the Senate ? and, therefore, the U.S. government as a whole ? has become ominously dysfunctional."

So writes Paul Krugman in today's New York Times, a column worth pondering.

Check these numbers: "The political scientist Barbara Sinclair has done the math. In the 1960s, she finds, 'extended-debate-related problems' ? threatened or actual filibusters ? affected only 8 percent of major legislation. By the 1980s, that had risen to 27 percent. But after Democrats retook control of Congress in 2006 and Republicans found themselves in the minority, it soared to 70 percent."

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