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Health reform a long time coming for Dingell

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WASHINGTON — John Dingell's got some celebrating to do.

Dingell, the 83-year-old dean of the U.S. House and the chamber's longest-serving member, has fought for sweeping [health](#) care reform since joining Congress in 1955, inheriting the mantle from his dad, who sat in the seat before him.

Sunday night's vote wasn't the single-payer, national [health insurance](#) plan that Dingell has been pushing but it's something.

"It was a great event. My dad, God bless him and God rest him, would be pleased," he said Monday.

Dingell, a Dearborn Democrat, helped write the bill and, in the end, encouraged his friend and protégé U.S. [Rep. Bart Stupak](#), a Menominee Democrat, to find a compromise on an abortion provision that would allow him to vote for the bill.

Despite threats that the constitutionality of the bill will be challenged, Dingell said he's not worried -- and that requiring Americans to have [insurance](#) is no different than requiring workers compensation programs or unemployment insurance.

Only one thing remains to finish this chapter: a reconciliation bill, with fixes to the legislation first passed by the House, which now needs Senate approval to become law. House Democrats, President Barack Obama and [Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid](#) of Nevada all say they have the needed 51 votes.

But it's still a leap of faith for typically suspicious House members.

"I intensely distrust the Senate, but we have the word of their leader," Dingell said. "I'm prepared to trust them one more time."