

## 1 **Health reform in America**

2 *(Original at*

3 [http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=15770733](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=15770733))

4 Barack Obama has completed the first of the chess matches he started  
5 upon becoming president of the USA. He has completed it with an  
6 audacious checkmate snatched from a seemingly hopeless position. But  
7 the rest of the chessboards are still gridlocked.

8 The health-care victory last week was a huge achievement for Mr Obama.  
9 Democrats suddenly lost their filibuster-proof majority in the Senate in  
10 January. Following this many urged Mr Obama to play for a draw and  
11 settle for a much more modest bill than the 2,400-page monster that he  
12 signed into law on March 23rd. Instead, the president buckled down: he  
13 dumped the (more expensive) House version of the bill, concentrated on  
14 the Senate version and travelled around the country, making powerful  
15 speeches and twisting arms. In short, he took charge, and started doing  
16 all the things he ought to have been doing a lot earlier.

17 His reward, however, is merely the right to continue playing. Had health  
18 reform failed after Mr Obama had invested so much of his personal  
19 authority in it, his presidency would have been crippled; and a president  
20 who is weak at home tends to be perceived as weak abroad as well.

21 Success thus gives Mr Obama a chance to get his presidency back on  
22 track, but hardly guarantees it. That depends on him learning from his  
23 mistakes and not exaggerating the extent of his success.

## Questions

- 1) What is meant by 'chess matches' and 'chessboards' in paragraph 1 (lines 4 and 7)?
- 2) Why was the health care victory a huge success for Obama?  
Note that '(to) filibuster' (line 9) is a specific US term which means *to obstruct parliamentary procedure by giving long speeches* and 'to buckle down' (line 12) is roughly equivalent to *focus on one's work*.
- 3) What does 'monster' in line 11 refer to?
- 4) Explain the meaning of 'House' and 'Senate' (lines 13 and 14).
- 5) 'Twisting arms' (line 15), that is *applying force*, was one of the methods used by Mr Obama to get the health care legislation through. What was his other technique and what is the article's opinion on these methods?
- 6) What has Mr Obama gained from his health-care victory?
- 7) What kind of mistakes has Mr Obama made in the past according to the text?
- 8) What is your opinion (if any) on American health care? Are you familiar with the major differences between American and European health care systems? What does the Obama reform of US health care consist of? Do you think that the Czech Republic should strive to make its health sector resemble the American one? Why/Why not?

## Vocabulary

gridlock (7) – any situation in which nothing can move or proceed in any direction

settle for something (11) – to be satisfied with something

take charge (15) – to assume control or command.

get back on track (21 to 22) – resume the intended or proper course

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, or <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček: