

Sestak town hall fuels health care reform talk

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UPPER DARBY — With a topic as emotionally incendiary as health care as a focus, the town-hall meeting of U.S. Rep. Joseph Sestak, D-7, of Edgmont, Saturday attracted vocal demonstrations from both sides of the issue, as well as a few quiet observers.

About 150 people packed the Collenbrook United Church in Drexel Hill for the congressman's second town hall on the subject since the passage of the health care legislation last month.

Sestak said the meeting was an opportunity to allow constituents to discuss their perspectives on the law's implications.

"I think one of the things that happens when legislation is passed ... is people don't explain them," he said. "A lot of representatives are responsible but are not accountable. I want to be accountable."

A supporter of the health care legislation, Sestak said he expects the critiques and the approval and wants to learn from both.

"This is certainly a responsibility of a representative," he said, adding that more town halls will be scheduled to allow people to voice their opinions. "We're going to continue to do these."

Tempers began to flare outside the house of worship as one supporter clashed with the row of opponents hoisting signs along Township Line Road.

"Bye, bye, go home, go home," the health care supporter said. "Sore loser."

"Go back to Russia," an opponent said.

Inside, the environment was similar as people lined the two sides of the church for a chance to voice their opinion at the microphone.

Daniel Prasalowicz, founder of the Aston-based Mr. Sandless, urged Sestak to cite specific places in the bill that outlined how his business would pay less for health care.

"Tell me exact clauses and passages that are going to lower my costs," he said.

Sestak said small-business owners such as Prasalowicz, who said he had between 200 and 500 employees, pay 18 percent more for their coverage than larger companies because of the inability to spread the risk.

"We're going to get rid of that 18 percent," he said, adding that Congress did not mandate that small businesses would have to participate in a statewide health care pool.

"It's government run," Prasalowicz said as he walked out of the church. "That isn't the truth. He is lying to you. You're fooling yourself that it's not Socialist."