

## **Beer tax on tap possibly for health care**

Joe Six-Pack may have to hand over nearly \$2 more for a case of beer to help provide health insurance for all. Details of the proposed beer tax are described in a Senate Finance Committee document distributed to lawmakers before a closed-door meeting today. Senators are focusing on how to pay for expanding health insurance for an estimated 50 million uninsured Americans, a cost that could range to some \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. No decisions were expected at the meeting, but Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, D-Mont., will use the feedback to shape legislation he intends to introduce in the next few weeks.

While many of the revenue raisers involve obscure provisions of federal law, most consumers can relate to a beer tax. Taxes on wine and hard liquor would also go up. And there might be a new tax on soda and other sugary drinks blamed for contributing to obesity. A tax of 3 cents per 12-ounce drink would raise about \$50 billion over 10 years, according to congressional estimates. Diet drinks, however, wouldn't be taxed. The idea behind the proposed increases is to tax lifestyle choices that contribute to rising medical costs. Under the proposal lawmakers are considering, beer taxes would be increased by 48 cents a six-pack, from the current 33 cents. Wine taxes would rise by 49 cents per bottle, from the current 21 cents. And the tax on hard liquor would increase by 40 cents per fifth, from the current \$2.14.