



President Donald Trump: Pass A Healthcare Bill Before August Recess

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White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus said on Sunday that President Trump expects Congress to pass the Obamacare repeal-and-replace package before it recesses for the late summer break.

A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said that the Senate leadership continues to work with Republican senators and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) on the bill. The Senate healthcare bill, otherwise known as the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA), continues to face opposition from conservatives and moderates. McConnell delayed the vote on the BCRA knowing that the bill lacked the support to pass through the upper chamber.

The CBO reported that the original BCRA would reduce the number of people insured by 22 million, reduce the deficit by \$321 billion, and lower average premiums by 20 percent over the next ten years.

Senate leadership will send two revised versions of the BCRA to the CBO to analyze. One version of the BCRA will include Senator Ted Cruz's (R-TX) "consumer choice" amendment which would allow for health insurers to offer health care plans that do not comply with Obamacare regulations, but only if they also offer plans that comply with the Obamacare insurance regulations. The other version of the BCRA would not include the consumer choice amendment.

Marc Short, the White House director of legislative affairs, said that Trump could support the consumer choice amendment to the BCRA.

Michael Cannon, the Cato Institute's director of health policy studies, said that the Cruz consumer choice amendment would serve as the most important defense against nationalized healthcare.

“Sen. @tedcruz's “Freedom Option” is the most important thing Congress can do to stop #SinglePayer. #ObamaCare”

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell plans to vote on the BCRA before breaking for the August recess, so Republicans only have three weeks to come to a compromise before then. Senate Republicans have yet to come to a consensus on the bill.

Conservatives such as Ted Cruz, Rand Paul (R-KY), Mike Lee (R-UT), and Ron Johnson (R-WI) chided the bill for not repealing enough of Obamacare, while moderates such as Susan Collins (R-ME) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) worry about the bill potentially stripping protections for pre-existing conditions and rolling back Obamacare's Medicaid expansion too fast.

Senate Republicans maintain a slim majority in the Senate. Republicans can only afford to lose two senators and have Vice President Mike Pence break the tie. At least seven or eight Republicans oppose the bill in its current form, which will make McConnell's balancing act between moderate and conservative Republicans increasingly difficult.

McConnell recently suggested that if Republicans remain unable to pass the Senate leadership's BCRA, then he will have to broker a deal with the Democrats instead. McConnell's strategy differs from President Donald Trump's recent proposition that if Republicans cannot pass the BCRA, they should repeal and then replace Obamacare.

Sens. Paul and Ben Sasse (R-NE) also support the strategy to repeal and then replace Obamacare.