



The drumbeat for repeal: Republicans' American Health Care Act may leave more uninsured than Obamacare repeal

Hardline Republicans point to a CBO report that finds simply repealing Obamacare is less harmful than Trumpcare

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Last month, former House Speaker John Boehner predicted that while Congressional Republicans will pass a “fix” to the Affordable Care Act, “I shouldn’t call it repeal-and-replace, because it’s not going to happen.”

Now facing down explicit threats from President Donald Trump and a remarkably tight Thursday deadline to vote on a newly revised health care bill that has yet to be assessed for its cost and coverage impact by the Congressional Budget Office, conservatives opposing the House GOP’s plan have seized on another report from the nonpartisan entity to argue that a full repeal of the law known as Obamacare would actually leave more Americans insured than the bill backed by Trump.

While a February poll found that 65 percent of Americans hope at least some parts of Obamacare survive the Republican repeal effort, conservatives insist that a full repeal of the law would leave 1 million more Americans insured than the American Health Care Act. The CBO’s analysis on the Republican leadership’s plan to repeal Obamacare predicts it would drop insurance for 14 million people in 2018, while 24 million would lose insurance by 2026. The CBO’s evaluation of the GOP’s 2015 full repeal bill, by comparison, indicated that simply destroying the framework of Obamacare would cost 23 million Americans their health insurance

Essentially, “a full repeal would cover more people than ObamaCare-Lite,” Michael F. Cannon, director of health-policy studies at the libertarian CATO institute, told the conservative Daily Caller. Several conservative groups have heavily relied on the CBO’s assessment of Trumpcare to rally opposition to the first major piece of legislation backed by the Trump administration.

“Americans for Limited Government urges the House to scrap the current proposal and to keep their word and pass a repeal bill that respects the states and voters who elected a GOP majority,” Rick Manning, president of the right-wing advocacy group, told Breitbart. The conservative media outlet, a favorite of Trump’s, has come out early and loudly against his repeal-and-replace effort.

Trumpcare, as the House GOP’s plan has already been dubbed, is far from a full repeal of Obama’s massive overhaul of the health care in the U.S. The White House-backed bill amounts more to Republicans’ ham-handed effort to thread massive tax cuts for the wealthy with popular consumer protections under Obamacare — an effort to fulfill the president’s campaign promises. Still, nearly 50 percent of Americans oppose the first version of Trumpcare — released less than two weeks ago — according to a polling average from Nate Silver’s FiveThirtyEight.com.

“Full repeal is the only solvent way forward,” a senior editor at the Conservative Review wrote.

“The GOP alternative would be asking people to purchase expensive Obamacare plans, with less financial assistance,” Phillip Klein, managing editor of the Washington Examiner, wrote. “In contrast, while full repeal would offer no assistance because it would get rid of Obamacare’s regulations, it would make insurance cheaper.”

The influential Heritage Foundation warned on Monday that, “Without repealing these insurance regulations – the regulatory architecture of Obamacare – Republicans will fail to keep their seven-year promise to fully repeal.”

The president, for his part, however, doesn’t seem very interested in negotiating with the most hardcore conservatives within his party. Despite flying to Trump’s South Florida resort, Mar-a-Lago, Texas Republican Sen. Ted Cruz reportedly did not get a chance to meet with Trump. Instead, Cruz, along with fellow conservative Mike Lee, R-Utah, “discussed the implications this bill could have on midterms and 2020 if not changed. They continued to push for full repeal and stripping the insurance regs,” with Trump’s senior advisor Steve Bannon.

For its part, the Trump administration has remarkably shifted away from Trump’s campaign rhetoric, which framed the Affordable Care Act as a disaster, to an argument that a full repeal of the law would actually be disastrous.

“What that does is place vulnerable people at risk, and that’s not something that the president’s willing to do, it’s not something that he said he would do,” Price told ABC’s “This Week” when asked about the full repeal pushed by conservatives.

“They want a tremendous health care plan. That’s what we have, and there are going to be adjustments to it. But I think we’ll get the votes,” Trump predicted on Tuesday. House Republicans are scheduled to vote on the newly tweaked bill on Thursday — likely without an updated CBO “score.”

“I’m gonna come after you,” Trump warned a divided meeting of the House Republican conference on Capitol Hill on Tuesday. “Many of you will lose your seats in 2018 if you don’t get this done.”

