Virginia Will Expand Medicaid Now That Republicans Have Relented

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Virginia's Republican Senate voted Wednesday to expand Medicaid, which will likely make Virginia the 33rd state to expand Medicaid.

The Virginia Republicans' move will make the Commonwealth the 33rd state to expand Medicaid under Obamacare.

Republicans in Virginia have blocked Medicaid expansion for four years, but several lawmakers relented after they nearly lost the state House in local elections last fall. Virginia voters listed health care as one of their top issues facing the state.

The Senate approved a budget on Wednesday that included Medicaid expansion. The House approved a similar plan roughly three months ago.

Virginia Democrat Gov. Ralph Northam, who beat Ed Gillespie last fall, promised during the campaign to expand Medicaid.

Republicans agreed to pass the budget after they included a provision requiring that able-bodied Medicaid recipients work or volunteer as a condition to receive Medicaid.

Northam said in a statement:

This budget is the culmination of five years of effort to bring our taxpayer dollars home from Washington and expand Medicaid. As a doctor, I'm so proud of the significant step we've taken together to help Virginians get quality, affordable health care.

The turning point in the Medicaid expansion fight came when Republican State Sen. Frank Wagner joined Republican State Sen. Emmett Hanger and 19 Virginia Senate Democrats to vote for a budget containing an expansion of Medicaid. State Sens. Ben Chafin and Jill Holtzman Vogel, two local Republican state lawmakers, also voted for Medicaid expansion on Wednesday.

Republican State Sen. Amanda Chase explained her opposition to Virginia's Medicaid expansion on Wednesday, saying, "That is debt, and I have four kids who are going to be having to pay for that for the rest of their lives. It's not just a fiscal burden, but it's not the best solution for people who want real, quality health care."

Republicans in Congress failed to repeal Obamacare when Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) tanked it in the Senate on multiple occasions.

At a campaign rally on Tuesday night, President Trump took a veiled shot at McCain, blaming the Arizona senator for denying Republicans their years-long promise to repeal Obamacare.

Trump said:

Then, of course, repeal and replace Obamacare. We had it done folks. It was done. Then early in the morning, somebody turned their hand in the wrong direction. That cost our country a lot. That was a very, very terrible thing that happened that night. That was a very terrible thing that cost our country $1 trillion in entitlement saving that nobody would have known. It would have given us a good health care plan, and that cost us a lot. Nobody knew that was going to happen, because we had it done. Repeal and replace! And the person who voted that way not only talked repeal and replace. He campaigned on it.

The House-passed American Health Care Act (AHCA) and Sen. Lindsey Graham's (R-SC) Graham-Cassidy Obamacare repeal proposal would have ended Obamacare's Medicaid expansion and placed limits on Medicaid spending. Trump said during Tuesday's rally in Nashville that Obamacare repeal would have saved the country $1 trillion in entitlement spending.

President Trump has taken executive actions to offer Americans more affordable healthcare options. He signed an executive order in October that expanded Association Health Plans (AHPs) and short-term health plans. Michael Cannon, a Cato Institute health scholar, stated in a blog on Tuesday that Trump's expansion of short-term health plans could cost 90 percent less than Obamacare plans.

Former Sen. Rick Santorum told Breitbart News in an exclusive interview that he will soon unveil an Obamacare block-grant proposal that will lower premiums and increase the number of people with health insurance.

Santorum said in his interview with Breitbart News, "We have an obligation to fix what's broken."