



GOP Alternative To Obamacare Is A Cruel, Ill-Prepared Sham

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After seven years of pounding their chests, clutching their pearls and screaming from the rooftops, Congressional Republicans have finally unveiled their Obamacare replacement.

It has become clear that the ill-conceived, hastily fashioned replacement is an inhumane, shoddy piece of red meat to bolster the Trump White House, which has been marred in crisis.

The most ironic part about this bill is that it will most likely hurt Donald Trump's most ardent supporters: the elderly and the middle class.

In a nutshell, here's what the replacement, inappropriately titled The American Health Care Act, entails and will do:

First, it will give an insurance company a larger tax break to increase CEO pay to over \$500,000 — over \$600 billion in tax cuts for the wealthiest CEOs and companies — which is astronomically more than it gives a family to buy coverage.

In fact, it actually lowers the tax break that middle and lower income families receive under the current Obamacare system. It will also give a tax cut for the wealthiest people's investment income.

Second, it ends Obamacare's minimum coverage requirement in 2020, meaning insurance companies will no longer have to cover mental, maternity and substance abuse care. As substance abuse claims up to 50,000 lives a year here in the United States, Republicans will literally yank away crucial coverage for those who need it most.

Third, with heavy Medicaid reductions and the offer of smaller tax credits, Republicans have been forced to acknowledge that not all Obamacare enrollees will be covered under this plan, despite their promise, as House Speaker Paul Ryan put it, no one would have "the rug pulled out from under them."

Fourth, anyone who goes without healthcare coverage for two months or more will face a 30 percent surcharge on premiums for an entire year. Anyone who has struggled financially knows that a 30 percent charge on a premium can break the bank.

One of the GOP's bigger talking points in drumming up opposition to Obamacare was that premiums were skyrocketing.

Now, they relish in punishing low-income and young Americans with a hefty surcharge if they lapse in coverage.

Fifth, it would essentially block Medicaid expansion past 2020, meaning millions of Americans in states like Florida that have not expanded yet would be blocked from more comprehensive and affordable coverage. It also makes cuts to regular Medicare and creates per-capita caps to funding that will result in increased costs for millions of seniors.

Sixth, we don't know how much this is going to cost. Seriously. After seven years, Republicans still do not have a cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office, nor do they intend to get one before they pass it. We don't know how much this will contribute to the debt deficit and how it would affect GDP.

House Leadership made a FAQ page on its website and it answers how it intends to pay for the new plan by saying "We are still discussing details."

So let's recap: we don't know much it will cost: it gives massive tax breaks to the top one percent and corporations; it lowers tax breaks for low-to-middle class Americans; it could potentially cancel coverage for serious medical issues; it skyrockets premiums; it won't cover all the Obamacare enrollees; it cuts Medicaid; it defunds Planned Parenthood.

The only thing they keep are the pre-existing conditions protections and the ability for people 26 and under to stay on their parents' plans.

Seven years and this is the best they could come up with? No wonder members of their own caucus hate it. No wonder the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute and the Koch Brothers hate it.

The people most affected are women, seniors, low-income and rural Americans. The most vulnerable in society.

Simply put, this is a mean-spirited, greed-inspired attempt at reform.

Instead of fixing a broken brakes system, the Republicans have decided to drive the entire car over the cliff.

The question is, if Obamacare is repealed and then replaced with this alternative, how many people will die under Trumpcare?