



House GOP 'Obamacare' repeal plan exposes party rift

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Just days ago, both Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill engaged in a search to find the House Republican Leadership's plan to repeal and replace the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act -- also referred to as 'Obamacare.' Voters as well as lawmakers posed the question, "Where's the bill?"

Late Monday, House Republicans -- led by House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden, R-Ore., and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas -- finally released that plan.

"After years of Obamacare's broken promises, we're proud to put forth a plan that represents a better way," Walden said in a news conference.

The new proposal keeps some of the more popular features of the Affordable Care Act such as dependents staying on their parents' insurance up to age 26, required coverage for people with preexisting conditions, and prohibiting insurance companies from imposing lifetime coverage caps.

Some of the changes in the GOP plan include allowing larger contributions to Health Savings Accounts, replace subsidies with tax credits to help consumers purchase insurance, and changes to the Medicaid expansion program -- capping federal funding to lower levels.

The GOP's plan would repeal the individual and employer mandates that require coverage under threat of tax penalties.

President Donald Trump tweeted support for the plan Monday night and Tuesday morning.

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price took the podium at the White House to also tout the merits of the plan, calling it a "first step."

"There are three phases of this plan," Price said. "One is the bill that was introduced last evening in the House of Representatives...Second are all the regulatory modifications and changes that can be put into place. As you all well know, the previous administration used regulations to a fare-thee-well. In fact, there were 192 specific rules that were put out as they relate to Obamacare, over 5,000 letters of guidance and the like. And we are going to go through every single one of those and make certain that they -- if they help patients, then we need to continue them. If they harm patients or -- or increase costs, then obviously they need to be addressed. And then there's other legislation that will need to be addressed that can't be done through the reconciliation process."

But many members of the GOP in the House and Senate are not satisfied with this plan, exposing divisions within the party that were once thought healed, after House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., took the gavel.

After reading a leaked version of the bill last week, Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., told CNN, "There's a lot of 'Obamacare Lite' in their bill."

Paul, along with other conservative members, gathered in the shadow of the Capitol Building for a news conference to call for a clean repeal vote of the law, just as Republicans had taken for the past few years during the Obama Administration.

"You have to get rid of Obamacare completely," Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, a member of the House Freedom Caucus, said at the news conference. "I will introduce the bill that every single Republican just 15 months ago, the bill that actually repeals Obamacare."

Jordan said that bill will be introduced in the House on Wednesday. Paul is introducing the Senate version of a clean repeal bill.

Conservative and libertarian groups such as [FreedomWorks](#), the [Club for Growth](#), and the [Cato Institute](#) all issued indictments of the plan.

When asked about the mounting opposition, Price said at the White House, "This is the beginning of the process and -- and we look forward to working with them and others to make certain that, again, we come up with that process that aligns with the principles that we've defined, that they actually adhere to or agree with as well."

That was a sentiment echoed by Vice President Mike Pence, who went to Capitol Hill on Tuesday to speak with Republicans.

"He [Pence] has assured us that as we look to make this better on behalf of the American people, that the bill that was introduced last night is still open for negotiation and modification," Meadows said.

On the other side of the aisle, Democrats panned the plan.

"Republicans revealed a Make America Sick Again bill that hands billionaires a massive new tax break while shifting huge costs and burdens onto working families across America," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said in a statement Monday night.

Senate Minority Leader Charles "Chuck" Schumer, D-N.Y., dubbed the plan 'Trumpcare' on the Senate Floor, saying, "Trumpcare will make health insurance in America measurably worse in just about every way and leave more Americans uninsured."

Another thing Republicans will have to contend with when it comes to their plan: the American public.

Both the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) and the [Pew Research Center](#) say they are seeing record-high popularity ratings for the Affordable Care Act.

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Voters who oppose repealing the law have been showing up en force to congressional [Republican town halls across the country](#) to make their voices heard, dominating headlines in the process.

Next week, on March 15th, FreedomWorks is sponsoring a rally in Washington to counter those headlines and to hold Republicans accountable for their 'repeal and replace' promises.