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## Pelosi's push for drug pricing caps faces solid opposition

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's push to impose pricing caps on prescription drugs has run into solid opposition from Republican lawmakers and conservative groups who have branded it a "socialist fantasy."

The legislation, dubbed the Lower Drug Costs Now Act, would put the federal government in charge of negotiations with drug makers to set U.S. prices in line with prices in Australia, Canada, France and the United Kingdom — all countries with nationalized health care systems.

The conservative group FreedomWorks called it an attempt to "import foreign price controls from nations with single-payer healthcare and, ultimately, harm innovation and leadership in the United States on the development and manufacture of prescription drugs."

The bill's Democratic backers, including lead sponsor Rep. Frank Pallone of New Jersey, insist it will keep soaring U.S. drug prices in check and end the wide disparity with lower prices abroad.

Republicans on the House committees overseeing the legislation balked that Mrs. Pelosi scrapped months of bipartisan work on drug pricing in favor of the far-left approach.

American Action Network, an issue-advocacy group closely affiliated with House Republican leadership, announced a \$2.5 million advertising campaign targeting the bill in 22 congressional districts.

The campaign will saturate the districts with mail, print and digital ads and hit seven of the districts with television ads.

"Pelosi's heartless drug plan is nothing more than a back door into the socialist health care system the far left has been dreaming of for years," said AAN President Dan Conston.

Senate Republicans are not taking Mrs. Pelosi's drug pricing push lying down, either.

"The Pelosi drug bill is a bad prescription for the American people," Sen. John Thune said Tuesday on the Senate floor. "Democrats know that the Pelosi drug bill has no chance of passing the Senate, but they chose to pursue the socialist fantasy instead of working with Republicans to develop a bipartisan prescription drug bill that isn't just price controls that might actually go somewhere."

"Like the Democrats' larger socialist fantasy Medicare for All, the Pelosi drug bill would ultimately hurt the very people that it's supposed to help, in this case by restricting their access to life-saving drugs and future prescription drug innovation."

The Senate Finance Committee advanced its own drug-pricing legislation this summer with bipartisan support. The Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act of 2019 was shepherded to two-thirds' support of the finance committee — albeit with several Republican defectors — by committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, Iowa Republican, and ranking Democrat Ron Wyden of Oregon.

“Our plan is leading the way toward a solution that can pass Congress and be signed by the president this year: It is the only comprehensive, bipartisan prescription drug legislation to have passed a congressional committee, and it has been endorsed by more than a dozen advocacy groups spanning the political spectrum, from the senior group AARP to the libertarian Cato Institute,” Mr. Grassley and Mr. Wyden said in a joint statement. “We encourage our colleagues to work with us to deliver for patients and taxpayers. Americans who can’t afford their prescription medicines are counting on Congress to act now.”

The fight over drug-pricing legislation has helped spur lobbying growth. The lobbyists at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld just posted their largest-ever quarter as measured by federal lobbying revenue, raking in \$11.3 million in the third quarter, up 27.2% over last year’s third quarter. A firm spokesman said the legislative activity around healthcare, trade and appropriations drove the increase.

Rival lobbying shop Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck similarly saw its federal lobbying revenue rise dramatically in the third quarter to \$10 million, up 22% over last year’s third quarter. Brownstein government relations department chairman Marc Lampkin said he expects the steady pace of lobbying work to continue well into the first half of 2020, contrary to the lobbying slowdown that sometimes accompanies presidential election cycles.