

Paul Ryan speaks in county for first time since campaign

Alison Bauter – January 13, 2013

For the first time since his vice presidential loss, U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan made an appearance in his home state and district Sunday, speaking about the national health care law at a Racine TEA Party event in the Franksville area of Caledonia.

Despite voting for the contentious fiscal cliff package that raised tax rates, it was clear Sunday that Ryan's status among his TEA Party supporters hadn't diminished. Members of the 280-person crowd literally leapt to their feet, applauding long and hard as the 2012 Republican vice presidential candidate walked in.

"We lost the presidential election, we lost the Rose Bowl... and we got knocked out of the playoffs yesterday. So, other than that, everything's going great," Ryan said, starting off with a joke that referred to the Wisconsin Badgers and the Green Bay Packers, then thanking supporters as he picked familiar faces out of the crowd at South Hills Country Club, 3047 Highway 41.

The last time Ryan, whose 1st Congressional District includes Racine County, made an appearance here, he was campaigning in Racine on behalf of presidential running mate Mitt Romney.

He was the first of many speakers at Sunday's Racine TEA Party-organized event, also featuring Mike Tanner of the Cato Institute, a national libertarian think tank; and state Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester.

"I think this thing is going to collapse under its own weight because it's not sustainable," Ryan told the crowd of the Affordable Health Care Act, popularly known as Obamacare. "It's sickly, and it cannot survive because it's such a poorly drafted law."

The Janesville Republican, entering his 15th year in office, detailed what he described as the hasty, "sloppy" way the health care bill became law.

That process "is probably illustrative of how this law is going to be," he said.

Ryan lambasted the Affordable Care Act's complexity and effectiveness, and predicted that it would eventually fail.

When that happens, Ryan said, House Republicans will have legislation for an alternative system drafted and ready.

"Your elected representatives owe you a better plan," he said.

"If we don't like where the country's headed on these issues ... then we owe you an alternative, a specific alternative."

In the case of Obamacare, Ryan said he favors a consumer-directed health care system driven by free-market competition.

He has similar plans to “show ... in legislative detail” alternatives on income tax reform and Medicare reform.

With President Barack Obama back in office and Democrats maintaining control of the U.S. Senate, Ryan said Congress’ main objective is to pressure the president to cut spending and “stave off a debt crisis.”

Republicans in the House will also “try to either embarrass or push or cajole the Senate to actually pass a budget,” he said.

At the state-level, state Rep. Vos and Wauwatosa state Sen. Leah Vukmir detailed what they think Wisconsin legislators can do as the health care law takes effect.

When it comes to expanding Medicaid, Vos said that pending further research, he currently would oppose such a move.

“Any opportunity to expand government health care in Wisconsin is probably going to be in the worst interests of Wisconsin taxpayers,” he said.

Vukmir said she’s planning to roll out several legislative initiatives regarding state health care services. Additionally, she said she would support Wisconsin joining Oklahoma’s lawsuit against the Affordable Care Act.