

4 GOP Senators: We Can't Currently Support the BCRA

Four Republican senators, including two who took part in the “secret” meetings that crafted the bill that is meant to “repeal and replace Obamacare,” have voiced their reluctance to pass the *Better Care Reconciliation Act* as it is currently worded.

Without the votes of Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas; Mike Lee, R-Utah; Rand Paul, R-Ky.; and Ron Johnson, R-Wis., the bill cannot pass with the necessary 51-vote majority unless Democrats cross the aisle. That’s extremely unlikely, giving the four Republicans a considerable amount of leverage—particularly considering Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s insistence that the bill be passed before the July 4 vacation.

Through Paul’s office, the four senators issued a joint statement Thursday night:

Currently, for a variety of reasons, we are not ready to vote for this bill, but we are open to negotiation and obtaining more information before it is brought to the floor. There are provisions in this draft that represent an improvement to our current health care system, but it does not appear this draft as written will accomplish the most important promise that we made to Americans: to repeal Obamacare and lower their health care costs.

Both Cruz and Lee were on the 13-member committee that drafted the bill over the course of seven weeks following the House of Representatives’ passage of the American Health Care Act. The statement gives no indication what the “variety of reasons” for opposing the bill in its current form might be. Given their close relationship with the House Freedom Caucus,

however, it likely boils down to two key provisions of the AHCA that weren't included in the BCRA:

- removing the “essential health benefits” requirements, and
- removing the “community rating” requirements.

With Republicans holding a 52-48 majority in the Senate, the loss of just two votes will kill any health care legislation at this point. Inserting the so-called “MacArthur Amendment,” crafted by Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows, R-N.C., and Tuesday Group Co-chairman Tom MacArthur, R-N.J., would likely sway them to support the bill—but it could lead to other GOP votes dropping off.

Even with the MacArthur Amendment, the AHCA passed the House by just four votes.

As a reconciliation bill—in other words, a “budget bill”—the BCRA needs only 51 votes, or a 50-50 tie broken by Vice President Mike Pence, in order to pass out of the Senate. It would then go to the House, which is likely to reject it in its current form, forcing a conference committee to hammer out a compromise bill.

Even President Donald Trump sees a need for some changes to the BCRA. He first tweeted support:

I am very supportive of the Senate #HealthcareBill. Look forward to making it really special! Remember, ObamaCare is dead.

Then, he retweeted an article quoting Cruz, who said he wants to be a “Yes” vote, but changes are needed. {eoa}