

Did RIN0care Just Become a Lot Less RIN0?

Something happened Friday at the White House that is almost unprecedented in modern-day American politics.

Just what that something was, we're not entirely sure just yet.

But, somehow, President Donald Trump put his legendary negotiating skills to work and convinced a number of conservative House Republicans to switch from "no" to "yes" votes on replacing the Affordable Care Act—also known as Obamacare—with a revised version of the American Health Care Act—which had earned the nickname RIN0care (Repeal In Name Only) shortly after it was unveiled. What revisions were made isn't clear at this point, and will likely be fleshed out in greater detail over the weekend.

Here's what we do know: Friday morning, the president met with members of the conservative Republican Study Committee for about 20 minutes. After that meeting, the congressmen emerged and announced they would all be voting yes on the health care legislation.

House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) was the first to speak with the media after the closed-door meeting concluded:

"We appreciate President Trump having us into the Oval Office to talk about healthcare and the improvements that are being made. The president has worked and said, "Bring us your best ideas." And there are members of the Republican Study Committee who have brought those good ideas and worked in a very diligent way to ultimately get to a 'yes' on this bill with changes that the president has asked us to make that we're going to make in the bill."

Scalise then turned to Rep. Mark Walker (R-N.C.), who said:

We're excited about today because it's historic, knowing that we're getting a couple of very important things to the steering committee members—work requirements through the country, and also something that we call “block grants,” which allow the states to be empowered. We believe they should be able to hold the reins when it comes to managing their population. We also think this would provide more coverage for the indigent, for those sick and for those disabled.

So we're excited about it today, and that's why we've come today to celebrate the American Health Care Act and moving forward with a ‘yes.’

Making Medicaid a block grant program was already part of the plan for the AHCA, so Walker's comments were a little bit confusing. We do know that Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Administrator Seema Verma, who was just confirmed midweek, has already contacted a number of legislators about how she intends to work with the states to help them modernize their Medicaid programs to provide more care at a lower cost, like she did in Indiana and other states.

Trump closed out the press availability with some remarks, but they didn't shed much more light on what changes are in store for the legislation, other than that he had been working the phones overnight and into the day Friday to convince conservatives and centrist Republicans to support the legislation. He said:

I just want to say that these are folks that were either a ‘no’ or a ‘maybe.’ And we had a nice meeting, and we've been talking all during the night. This didn't just happen over the last 20 minutes. This has been going all night long.

And we are doing some incredible things. I want everyone to

know I'm 100 percent behind this. I want everybody to know that the press has not been speaking properly about how great this is going to be. They have not been giving it a fair chance. The press is—as you know, I call it the 'fake news.' This is going to be great for people. I watch—I say, that's not the bill we're passing. And I also want everybody to know that all of these “nos,” or potential “nos,” are all “yeses.” Every single person sitting in this room is now a “yes.”

And we made certain changes, and, frankly, little—although the block grant is very important, because I want the states to get the money and to run their program, if they want to run it, because they can do it better than the federal government. They're better-equipped than the federal government.

They also want people to know that Obamacare is dead; it's a dead health care plan. It's not even a health care plan, frankly. And I watched the architect of the plan—yesterday I watched the old clip where he said the American people are stupid to have voted for it. I watched Bill Clinton saying, this is the craziest thing I've ever seen. And only because everyone knows it's on its last dying feet, the fake news is trying to say good things about it—the fake media. And there is no good news about Obamacare. Obamacare is dead. And unless we gave it massive subsidies in a year from now or six months from now, it's not even going to be here. So when they say, 'Oh, more people on the plan,' there's not going to be any people on the plan.

I was in Tennessee—I was just telling the folks—and half of the state has no insurance company, and the other half is going to lose the insurance company. The people don't know what to do. It's a disaster. Obamacare is dead. Nothing to do with these people. Nothing to do with me. It's on a respirator and it's just about ready to implode.

Now, we could wait for six months or a year and let it

happen. It's not the right thing to do for the people. This is a great plan. This is going to be fantastic. You're going to have bidding at the one level by insurance companies. And remember this—remember this: Those lines are going to come out, you're going to have bidding by insurance companies like you've never seen before. Plans are going to come out like nobody has ever seen before. Plans that nobody has even thought of now are going to be devised by insurance companies to take care of people.

And we're going to take care of people at all levels. So I just want to let the world know: I am 100 percent in favor. These folks—and they are tough, and they love their constituents, and they love this country—these folks were “nos”—mostly “nos”—yesterday. And now every single one is a “yes.” And I just want to thank you. We're going to have a healthcare plan that's going to be second to none. It's going to be great. And the people will see that.

And, by the way, it will take a little while—because before it all kicks in and welds together, it takes a little while. With Obamacare it got worse and worse. Premiums went up 116 percent. They went up 58 percent. The governor of Minnesota said that Affordable Care Act—Obamacare—is no longer affordable. That's what he said. The Affordable Care Act is no longer affordable. And he's the guy that—he's a good Democrat, he wanted Obamacare. He said it's no longer affordable. Obamacare is not an alternative. It's not there. It's dead. It's dead.

So I just want to say thank you very much. I really appreciate it. One hundred percent of the “nos” are “yeses.” And some of them were strong “nos.” Some were just “nos.” And we have a couple that were mixed. But I just want to thank you folks. And we're going to have a great, great, health care plan.

Shortly after the meeting dismissed, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) announced he would be bringing the legislation to the House floor for a vote Thursday next week, meaning he's confident he has the 218 votes necessary to get it passed. The Senate will then be able to take up the bill, since it is being handled through the budget reconciliation process. {eo}