

Freedom Caucus Gives President Trump an Offer He Can't Afford to Refuse

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee said President Donald Trump was taking a page out of his book, *The Art of the Deal*, last week when he went after conservatives in the House Freedom Caucus over the failure of the American Health Care Act.

He recently observed on social media:

House Republicans: We refuse to pass the GOP Obamacare repeal and replace bill!

Trump: Okay, I'll attack the Freedom Caucus and suggest that maybe I could work with Democrats on what to do about Obamacare.

House Republicans: Whoa! Hold the phone! We can come up with a better bill and pass it before Easter recess!

ART OF THE DEAL!

What the governor was referencing was an interview House Freedom Caucus leaders Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) and Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) did with *The Washington Examiner* in which he said the members of his group would be willing to vote for the AHCA if it included two new provisions that were previously planned for "Phase 2" of the Trump administration's "repeal and replace" plan. Meadows said:

The Obamacare mandates, there are 12 of them. The leadership plan had two of them repealed; two of 12. The Freedom Caucus has asked for two to be included in the repeal, which would bring us to a total of four of the 12 Obamacare mandates. That's our ask. These two Obamacare mandates repealed in exchange for yes votes, and that's not being reported. You

know, it's well, you just can't get to yes; you can't get there.

We're talking about asking for a little over 15 percent of the Obamacare mandates to be repealed and we can't get a yes from that? We're willing to give the moderates something they want, whether it's on Medicaid expansion or additional monies for perhaps something that they see that is being pulled out. But in the end, the request is pretty simple: two of 12 Obamacare mandates when we campaigned on the fact that we were going to repeal all 12.

Specifically, the two mandates that Freedom Caucus members want repealed are the "essential health benefits," and the "community ratings," which are arguably the two biggest drivers of rate increases across the country. The essential health benefits require 10 types of coverage be written into every health insurance policy—at the direction of the Department of Health & Human Services, not written into the Obamacare law itself—while the community ratings require that when rates must be raised on high-risk members of an insurance pool, they must be raised on everyone an equal amount.

In essence, the government is mandating what kind of coverage you must buy, and it's mandating that healthy insurance customers must pay for the increased risk of insuring less healthy customers. Freedom Caucus members have said these constituted the hill they were willing to die on with regard to the *American Health Care Act*.

They might be a lot closer to getting a deal after the weekend. President Trump went golfing Saturday with Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) to discuss efforts to repeal Obamacare. Both emerged from those discussions with good news.

"We had a great day with the president," the senator told the weekend press pool afterward. "Played some golf, and we talked and we talked about a little bit of health care. I continue to

be very optimistic that we are getting closer and closer to an agreement on repealing Obamacare.” {eo}