

GOP Senator Says There's 'No Reason' for Obamacare Repeal to Fail Now

Nationally syndicated radio host Hugh Hewitt was lamenting the “collapse” of the Senate’s bill meant to begin the process of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act—also known as Obamacare—until he heard from Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., who shared with him some exciting news about the effort to undo the seven-year-old health care law.

The Senate, he said, will take up the legislation to fully repeal Obamacare, which it passed previously in December of 2015.

“[Y]ou’re right that the American health care system is still groaning under the weight of Obamacare,” he said. “That’s why we can’t simply accept failure as an outcome. I am pleased to see that Senator McConnell has said that we’re going to move forward with the very bill to repeal Obamacare on which 49 Republican senators voted just 18 months ago in December of 2015. And I know that both John Kennedy and Luther Strange, two new Republican senators over the last year, would vote for that bill as well, 51 votes.”

Hewitt asked if that meant the Senate would take up the House bill and immediately amend it to be a complete repeal of Obamacare. He said that’s exactly what McConnell and GOP senators will do and said he has no reason to believe the bill will fail.

“I don’t see how any Republican senator who voted just 18 months ago for this very piece of legislation could now flip-flop, 18 months on with Obamacare still inflicting so much harm on Americans and the fact that we campaigned on this for four straight elections,” he said.

Hewitt said he thought any Republican who now voted against a full repeal would be ending his or her political career and said he or she should just resign. Cotton agreed that it would be difficult to justify the switch to voters without sounding hypocritical. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, is the only Republican who voted against the measure in 2015, meaning it should have 51 votes just with GOP senators—50 with Sen. John McCain still recuperating from surgery.

But, with 50 votes, Vice President Mike Pence could break a tie, sending the legislation to the House. Cotton believes the votes are there to pass the bill without forcing the matter to a conference committee to hammer out differences.

“[T]he vast majority of House Republicans voted for this very bill in December of 2015 as well,” he said. “I’m not sure if it’s the full 218, but I suspect it’s close enough that with the new House Republicans that very same bill on which most of them voted in 2015 would pass as well. So I believe that we’d be able to send this bill straight to the president for his signature.

“Now the phase-in is two years out, so you know, it repeals the legislation now, and then it gives us a couple of years to craft a solution. It also allows senators, congressmen in both parties to take their case to the American people. In 2018 will be another election, but maybe the most defining election in which the American people get to decide who they want to craft the long-term solutions for our health care system.”
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