

House Conservatives Make 4 Demands of Senate Health Care Bill

Conservatives in the House of Representatives are upset that Senate Republican leaders are trying to water down their version of the American Health Care Act, but this time the complaints aren't coming from the House Freedom Caucus.

U.S. Rep. Mark Walker, R-N.C., chairman of the influential Republican Study Committee—arguably the fourth-highest ranking member of the GOP leadership in the House of Representatives—sent a blistering letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., in which he made the following four demands for the Senate's version of the bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare:

- Immediately prohibit new states from receiving an enhanced federal share for expanding Medicaid and impose a phaseout of the Obamacare's Medicaid expansion by 2020.
- Allow states to waive "certain onerous requirements" imposed by Obamacare, which would be accomplished through an amendment added to the AHCA that allowed states to scrap Essential Health Benefits and community ratings mandates.
- Repeal taxes introduced by Obamacare "in the most expeditious manner possible."
- Strip federal funding from Planned Parenthood for a year and include Hyde Amendment language to ensure the plan's tax credits can't be used to pay for abortions.

While these provisions were necessary to get the bill passed in the House, they will likely lead to its failure in the

Senate, where Republicans have a more tenuous grip on control, and those who are in the chamber lean far more moderately in their views on so-called “social issues.” But Walker’s letter makes it clear the House doesn’t intend to budge on those points.

He wrote, in part:

For seven years, we have shared a common goal of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act. The ACA has been plagued by failures and dysfunction, and resulted in lost coverage, higher premiums, and limited choice of insurance plans and medical providers for most American families.

The policy ultimately developed by the House and encapsulated in HR 1628, the American Health Care Act, substantially evolved between the leak of a working draft in early February and May 10, when the bill narrowly passed the House by a vote of 217-213. During this time, members engaged in vigorous and robust debate and individually weighed trade-offs, while carefully crafting policy solutions to meet the parameters of Senate guidance regarding the restrictive framework of the reconciliation process. Including income caps for tax credits, improvements for federally supported high risk pools and ensuring states can implement work requirements for able-bodied adults on Medicaid were just some of the policies added to the AHCA during our thorough and deliberate process

...

We eagerly await the day when we can fulfill our promise to the American people and send legislation to the president’s desk repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act. As the Senate continues its deliberative process, we urge you to carefully evaluate the American Health Care Act and consider the important role these policies played in building consensus in the House.

McConnell has signaled the Senate’s version will be ready for

a vote before it goes on vacation for the Fourth of July holiday, meaning it will have to be released this week in order to receive a Congressional Budget Office score. Senate rules require a CBO score on any budget bill before it comes to a floor vote—so far, all work on the legislation has been done behind closed doors. {eo}