

House Votes to Approve American Health Care Act

By a vote of 217-213, the House of Representatives approved the American Health Care Act, which repeals three of the costliest provisions of the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare.

Just ahead of that vote, the House approved one last-minute amendment that will require all members of Congress and their staffers to abide by the provisions of Obamacare. That measure was added because some in the Senate had used an old rule of the chamber to exempt themselves from the health care law.

That amendment passed by a 429-0 recorded vote. The irony is that the recorded vote was called after a voice vote that appeared to fall along party lines. Prior to the final debate, which lasted a little more than two hours, the House passed a couple of procedural votes related to the ACHA with about 235 votes in favor.

President Donald Trump was apparently watching the House proceedings throughout the day, and tweeted about what he was seeing.

First, at approximately 9 a.m.:

Death spiral! 'Aetna will exit Obamacare markets in VA in 2018, citing expected losses on INDV plans this year'

Then, at approximately 1:45 p.m.:

I am watching the Democrats trying to defend the "you can keep you doctor, you can keep your plan & premiums will go down" ObamaCare lie."

And, finally, just as the House began taking up the first of several votes on the bill:

Insurance companies are fleeing ObamaCare – it is dead. Our healthcare plan will lower premiums & deductibles – and be great healthcare!

The president has called Republican leaders to the White House after the vote is completed. It's not yet clear what he has planned for that meeting. He was scheduled to fly out to New York City, where he will meet with Australian Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull and commemorate the anniversary of the World War II Battle of the Coral Sea at the *USS Intrepid* museum.

The bill's biggest obstacle now is the U.S. Senate, where it needs 51 votes. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) hasn't given a solid indication of where the whip count stands, particularly now that the legislation has been amended.

If the AHCA is passed into law, the next step will be for Secretary of Health & Human Services Dr. Tom Price to use his executive authority to begin removing the portions of Obamacare that can be rooted out administratively. Once that is accomplished, the final stage of the process will be for Congress to sweep away the remaining vestiges of Obamacare with another piece of legislation. {eo}