

The Senate Votes on Health Care Today, and President Trump Has Offered 3 Options

President Donald Trump's patience with Congress is just about gone.

Following a national address Monday afternoon in which he called out Democrats and Republicans for failing to come up with an alternative to replace the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, the White House released a statement in which the president encouraged Congress to vote Tuesday to begin debate on a health care bill. The statement offers three different options, all of which he says would provide immediate relief to Americans struggling under the existing laws.

Option 1: Pass the House's Bill

This bill has already passed the House, and by passing it in the Senate, it can go immediately to the president's desk, where he will sign it into law. This bill was supposed to be crafted to meet the Senate's arcane "reconciliation" rules, meaning it only needs 50 votes—plus Vice President Mike Pence's tie-breaking vote—to pass.

Option 2: Pass the Senate's Amendment to the House Bill

This bill would need to go back to the House for a vote, and if they two chambers cannot agree, it would go into a conference committee process, where a compromise bill would be crafted. This process takes longer, but as long as the final legislation includes the president's key priorities, he would be sure to sign it. Also crafted to meet the "reconciliation" rules, it would need only 50 votes—plus the vice president's tiebreaker—to pass the Senate.

“For months, the administration has supported multiple bills that repeal central parts of Obamacare and include replacement provisions, such as market stability funding and an expansion of Health Savings Accounts,” the White House statement reads. “These bills include H.R. 1628, the American Health Care Act of 2017, and the Senate amendment to H.R. 1628, the Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017. Both pieces of legislation fulfill President Trump’s promise to provide relief to Americans suffering from the failures of Obamacare and to transition to a better health care system by taking power out of Washington and returning it to the states and to families.”

Option 3: Pass the Restoring Americans’ Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act

This bill was already passed by the House and Senate in 2015, but was ultimately vetoed by President Barack Obama. Like the other two options, however, it does meet the requirements of “reconciliation”—unless Parliamentarian of the Senate Elizabeth MacDonough, a Democrat appointed in 2012 by then-Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., changes her mind—meaning it needs just 50 votes and the vice president to pass.

“H.R. 3762, the Restoring Americans’ Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act, which passed both chambers in 2015, outlines yet another path to providing relief from Obamacare,” the statement added. “This bill repeals Obamacare’s damaging individual and employer mandate penalties and its tax increases, while providing a reasonable transition period for the Congress to enact patient-centered healthcare. The administration supports H.R. 3762 as a first step in a multi-step repeal-and-replace process.”

As Obamacare exchanges continue a collapse that began years ago, the White House added, the president and his administration reiterate that “inaction on health care reform is not an option.”

“The administration strongly encourages all senators to support the Motion to Proceed to H.R. 1628 and to move forward on repealing Obamacare and replacing it with true reforms that expand choice and lower costs,” the statement concluded.

In case you missed it, you can watch the president’s national address regarding health care held at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building adjacent to the White House. {eo}