

REPEAL & REPLACE ACTIVITY REPORT **FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 4th, 2017**

ACA Repeal and Replace

New amendment to the American Health Care Act adds \$15 billion for reinsurance^{1,2,3}

Republicans have continued holding meetings to discuss where to take their plans to repeal and replace the ACA. On Thursday (4/6), the House Rules Committee met and voted on an amendment to the AHCA put forth by two members of the Freedom Caucus (one of the groups that opposed the AHCA, leading to the bill being pulled before it could be voted on two weeks ago). The amendment would provide an additional \$15 billion for states to use to reimburse health insurers who cover sicker, high-cost individuals. This money would be separate from the \$100 billion Patient and State Stability Fund included in the bill, which states could also use for similar purposes. The amendment was murky on details, not specifying which patients would be considered “high-cost.” The Rules Committee approved the amendment, but it was not sent to the House floor for a vote before the Easter/Passover recess.

White House and House conservatives work on ACA repeal deal^{4,5,6}

On Monday (4/3), the House Freedom Caucus met with Vice President Mike Pence and other members of the Trump administration to discuss compromises on the AHCA. Freedom Caucus members were keen to allow states the flexibility to opt out of some of the ACA’s coverage requirements. States would be able to waive the requirements that insurers offer a standard set of essential health benefits and that they could not risk-rate individuals. These two measures would increase the cost of coverage for sicker individuals and would allow insurers to offer skimpy health plans to consumers, leaving them with heavy cost-sharing and larger medical bills. However, a group of more moderate House Republicans were strongly opposed to these changes and by Wednesday, these proposals seemed to have disappeared and were never formalized into amendments to the bill.

Meanwhile, Senator Rand Paul indicated interest in working with the Trump administration in weakening the ACA without new legislation by making the current premium subsidies available less generous. This would not necessitate voting on a new program, but instead would take the form of amendments to the ACA.

¹ <http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/4/6/15206032/republican-health-plan-amendment-wont-help>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/06/us/politics/health-care-affordable-care-act-house.html>

³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/at-trumps-request-house-may-tweak-health-care-bill-before-recess/2017/04/06/95c5dac4-1abb-11e7-855e-4824bbb5d748_story.htm

⁴ <http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/politico-pulse/2017/04/obamacare-repeal-lives-219585>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/us/politics/health-care-house-republicans.html>

⁶ <http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/4/4/15177578/obamacare-repeal-new-trumpcare>

Iowa loses half of insurers in health insurance exchange⁷

Citing concerns over the uncertainty of the ACA, Wellmark and Aetna announced that they would not sell insurance in Iowa’s health insurance exchange in 2018. This leaves 94 of Iowa’s 99 counties with just one insurer offering plans through Healthcare.gov. The deadline for insurers across the country to decide about continuing to offer coverage through the insurance exchanges in 2018 is June 21st.

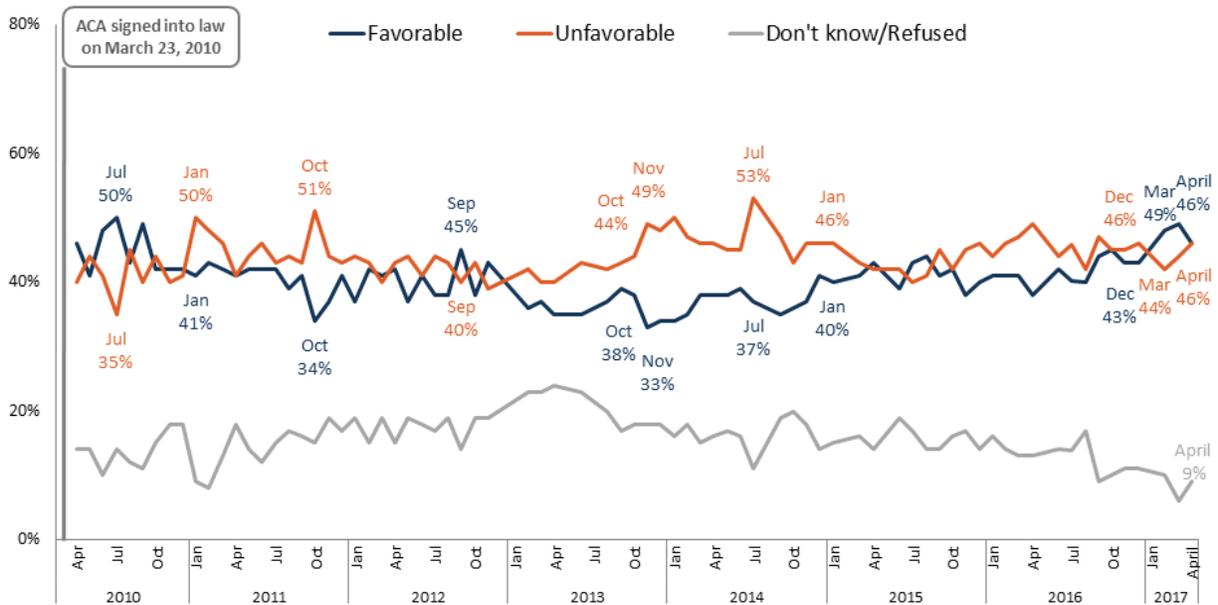
KFF: Health Tracking Poll finds 64% of public think AHCA defeat a “good thing”⁸

The latest Kaiser Health Tracking Poll asked Americans about their views on the AHCA being pulled from a vote and found that two-thirds thought it was a “good thing” that the bill was not passed. While Americans are divided on their views of the ACA (46% are favorable towards the law, 46% are unfavorable), 61% think that President Trump and the Republican-controlled congress are responsible for any problems with the ACA moving forward and three-fourths of the public think that President Trump and his administration should do what they can to make the ACA work.

Figure 10

Public Divided in Views of the Affordable Care Act

As you may know, a health reform bill was signed into law in 2010. Given what you know about the health reform law, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of it?



NOTE: Data not collected for Dec 2012, Jan 2013, May 2013, Jul 2013, Aug 2014, Feb 2015, May 2015, Jul 2015, May 2016, and Jan 2017.
SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Polls



⁷ <http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/4/6/15211816/iowa-lost-obamacare-insurers-ahca-repeal>

⁸ <http://kff.org/health-reform/poll-finding/kaiser-health-tracking-poll-april-2017-the-fall-of-the-ahca-and-next-steps-for-the-aca/>

Medicaid

Kansas' attempt to expand Medicaid unable to reach veto override⁹

Following Governor Sam Brownback's veto of a bill that would have expanded Medicaid in Kansas, the Kansas House fell three votes short of a two-thirds majority to override the Governor's veto. Expanding Medicaid would have provided coverage to 150,000 additional Kansans.

Virginia legislature rejects Medicaid expansion possibility¹⁰

Virginia's Governor Terry McAuliffe (D) was blocked by the state's legislature when he attempted to restore language to the budget that would have allowed him to expand the state's Medicaid program. Expanding Medicaid would provide coverage to 400,000 additional Virginians.

Other news

Senate Republicans activated nuclear option to allow for Supreme Court nominee confirmation¹¹

Senate Republicans voted on Thursday (4/6) to change the chamber's rules for Supreme Court nominee confirmations. The decision, known as the "nuclear option," allows nominees to be confirmed with a simple majority rather than the two-thirds vote for cloture needed to advance a nomination to a vote. This historic decision will forever change the process for confirming justices to the U.S. Supreme Court. Democrats went "nuclear" for non-Supreme Court nominees in 2013, but felt that the rules for the Supreme Court should not be touched as the positions are lifelong. The same rule change for legislation cannot be considered until the start of the new session in January 2018. While most Senators are indicating that they have no interest in making the same move for legislative procedures, others believe that the move is inevitable in the long run.

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/03/health/kansas-brownback-veto-expand-medicaid.html>

¹⁰ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/va-legislature-sustains-mcauliffe-vetoes/2017/04/05/566ad150-1a15-11e7-9887-1a5314b56a08_story.html

¹¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/daily-202/2017/04/06/daily-202-the-legislative-filibuster-will-be-at-risk-as-soon-as-the-senate-goes-nuclear/58e5c0afe9b69b3a72331e4f/?utm_term=.5ed037eaec7&wpisrc=nl_evening&wpmm=1