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# OPINION

## Stand Up for the Human Right of Health Care

### Join allies for a healthy America

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

In a country that says it values life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, how can any of our leaders of any political party or ideology propose actions to slash health care for tens of millions of the neediest in order to give tax cuts to the extremely non-needy wealthy, favoring millionaires over mothers, billionaires over babies, and powerful corporations already garnering huge sums in government subsidies over children?

That is what the Senate version of the already obscenely unjust House-passed American Health Care Act (AHCA) would do. Crafted in secret by 13 white men without a single hearing, the Senate health bill that purports to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) actually caps and cuts Medicaid — an indispensable lifeline that has served America's most vulnerable children, mothers giving birth, people with disabilities and vulnerable elderly well for more than 50 years.



But in a representative democracy like ours the people elect members of Congress to represent us and be our voice. As members of the Senate headed home to their districts for their July 4th recess it's up to us to fulfill our democratic duty and make sure our voices are heard and make sure our Senators fulfill their democratic duty to protect all their constituencies and not just those who make campaign contributions to them or their political party.

Here are five of the many ways the Senate's misleadingly and wrongly named "Better Care Reconciliation Act" (BCRA), more appropriately named the "Worse Care Reconciliation Act," harms children, offers worse care and makes us question the moral judgment of our Senate leaders:

1. Ends Medicaid as we know it, jeopardizing the health of 40 percent of America's children. Medicaid currently ensures comprehensive, affordable health coverage for 37 million low-income and disabled children, including 40 percent of all children with special health care needs, and covers more than 40

percent of all births. Who is going to meet this huge need if Medicaid crumbles?

2. Slashes \$772 billion in Medicaid to give tax cuts to wealthy individuals and powerful corporations, placing the interests of those who need help the most below those who need no government assistance. The 400 highest income taxpayers alone would receive tax cuts worth about \$33 billion over 10 years. Millionaires would get tax cuts exceeding \$50,000 a year. The Senate bill would cut \$100 billion in taxes for drug companies and health insurers.

3. Makes at least 22 million more Americans uninsured, 15 million from Medicaid alone. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates 15 million people would become uninsured in 2018 and a total of 22 million people would be added to the ranks of the uninsured by 2026. The CBO concludes this bill alone would result in a 26 percent reduction in Medicaid funding over 10 years and grow to a 35 percent reduction by the end of the next ten years as the cap on funding tightens.

4. Severely restricts Medicaid dollars that now help disabled chil-

dren and adults remain at home, in communities and out of institutions and help schools and child protection agencies better meet children's needs.

5. Leaves millions of Americans paying more for less health care. Premiums, deductibles and other forms of cost-sharing will dramatically raise costs, particularly for older and sicker people, and at the same time states will be allowed to limit coverage for essential health benefits such as maternity and pediatric care, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, and habilitative care.

Good health in our country with the biggest economy in the world should be a right and not a privilege for all and not just for the wealthy. Every life is sacred and of equal value. I agree with Dr. King that "of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhuman."

So please stand up and make your voice heard in no uncertain terms. Be as loud and as persistent as you can until your leaders do the right thing for all their constituents and all in America.

Demand that your Senators reject the cruel and unjust "Worse Care"

Reconciliation Act. Ask them to do for your children and family members what they enjoy at taxpayers' expense for their own children and family members. Your voices have already made a difference. Recent national polls show fewer than one in five people approve of the Senate bill. But keep going and increase the pressure on anyone seeking to wipe out the health protections everyone in America needs and deserves.

Visit or call Senators' state offices. Join other allies for a healthy America in town hall meetings and other forums. This is a life and death struggle for millions of people of all ages about who we are and what we value as a nation.

If you believe that children's lives are as important as corporate profits and babies' and mothers' chances to be healthy are as important as billionaires and millionaires, stand up and be heard. Do not be fooled by the alternative and fake name of the Better Care Reconciliation Act. It's a Trojan horse — rotten to the core. No amount of tinkering can fix it. Urge your Senators to step up to #ProtectMedicaid and all generations from health injustice.

*Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children's Defense Fund.*

## Tricks, Games Meant to Suppress Minority Voting

### Skewing democracy white

BY ROBERT C. KOEHLER

Every real problem this country — and this planet — face is replaced by a fantasy problem, which all the powers of government then pretend to address.

Meet Donald Trump, master of the street con, trickster extraordinaire.

How many cabinet positions and high-level government posts have been filled by someone whose life work and *raison d'être* make him or her the least qualified person imaginable for the job? Names burst from the news: Scott Pruitt, Betsy DeVos, Rick Perry, Jeff Sessions . . .

And now there's Kris Kobach, who brings an ironic twist to the con, in that he's actually a perfect fit for the position he has recently been given by Trump: vice chairman of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, a.k.a., the voter fraud commission, whose mandate is to stanch the flow of illegal people swarming into America's polling places by the millions and, ahem, voting. Good God, they almost threw the election to Hillary last year.



Kobach, Kansas secretary of state, is the guy who developed Crosscheck, a voter-tracking system that is ingenious in its inanity:

It finds people on the list of registered voters in participating states who have the same names, like . . . oh, James Brown (actual example) . . . and declares that they are one person voting multiple times.

And they are then subject to removal from the voter roll, even (eye-ball roll is appropriate here) if their middle names differ. This is such an obviously inept process it's hard to believe anyone on the planet takes it seriously. But it's part of hardcore Republican governance.

It's almost as though, in an eerie way, Trump Republicans really do believe that illegal voters are invading the system — if not technically illegal, then morally illegal, in that voting against Trump proposals or Republican ideas in general (the wall, the elimination of Medicaid) is a sign that that you're not a real American. And this is especially true if you belong to a racial minority.

The mission of Kobach's commission is to ensure that Republican America holds strong, even as the party itself sinks ever more deeply into minority status.

The New York Times editorial board defined the "real goal" of the Commission on Election Integrity thus: "to make voting harder for millions of Americans, on the understanding that Republicans win more elections when fewer people vote."

Investigative reporter Greg Palast, who has long been sounding the warning about Crosscheck, put it a bit more bluntly: "This country is violently divided, but in the end, there simply aren't enough white guys to elect Trump nor a Republican Senate. The only way they could win was to eliminate the votes of non-white guys—and they did so by tossing Black provisional ballots into the dumpster, ID laws that turn away students — the list goes on. It's a web of complex obstacles to voting by citizens of color topped by that lying spider, Crosscheck."

American quasi-democracy has a long, long history of what one might call protective racism, and it hasn't gone away. What requires protection is the status quo of power. And nothing is more inconvenient to the status quo than real democracy, with regular people having a say in the creation of their social structure. That means the politically powerful are always vulnerable, especially if they focus on serving their own in-

terests, not their constituents'. You can see the problem with that.

The Crosscheck program, as well as the presidential claim that the problem with America's democracy is that too many people are voting, are examples of contemporary — deeply coded — racial politics. According to Palast, Crosscheck's list of suspect voters in the 2016 election "was so racially biased that fully one in six registered African-Americans were tagged in the Crosscheck states that include the swing states of Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, Arizona and more."

Forget about the Russians. Election tampering is a game played by Republicans. And it's hardly limited to Crosscheck. Another highly effective vote suppression measure is the recent spate of strict voter ID laws, which, according to a study by researchers at the University of California San Diego, "skew democracy in favor of whites and those on the political right."

This is because "the lack of proper identification" — that is, a government-issued photo ID — "is not evenly distributed across the population. Studies show that a lack of identification is particularly acute among the minority population, the poor, and the young," according to

the study.

Furthermore, existing laws are not applied evenly. Instead, "poll workers disproportionately ask minorities for identification." And, the study notes, "these laws are passed almost exclusively by Republicans and . . . they tend to emerge in states with larger black populations."

Other tricks and games meant to suppress minority voting include fewer polling locations, shorter hours for voting, repeal of same-day voter registration and the disenfranchisement of felons and (in three states) ex-felons, which is one of many shattering consequences of the country's expanded prison-industrial complex.

"The effects of voter ID laws that we see here are eerily similar to the impact of measures like poll taxes, literacy tests, residency requirements, and at-large elections which were used by the white majority decades and centuries ago to help deny blacks many basic rights," the study concludes.

The fraud is committed by those who govern, not those who vote. It comes from the top down.

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