

BRIEFLY

Trump, Merkel seek common ground in meeting

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and German Chancellor Angela Merkel tried to sidestep their differences in a meeting at the White House Friday, but their first public appearance was punctuated by some awkward moments.

During a photo op in the Oval Office, the two did not shake hands before reporters. Trump pushed back against the notion in Europe that his “America First” agenda means he’s an isolationist, calling such a suggestion “another example of, as you say, fake news.” And he referred to the United States as “a very powerful company,” before quickly correcting that to “country.”

When a German reporter asked Trump if he regrets any of his commentary on Twitter, Trump said, “Very seldom.”

When the subject turned to economic issues, Merkel attempted to project a conciliatory approach. She said the “success of Germans has always been one where the German success is one side of the coin and the other side of the coin has been European unity and European integration. That’s something of which I’m deeply convinced.”

Those comments appeared aimed at making a case to Trump on the benefits of the European Union. Trump backed Britain’s departure from the EU and has expressed skepticism of multilateral trade agreements.

The two leaders tried to express their common bonds but showed minimal rapport in their first encounter, a departure from Merkel’s warm relations with Obama during his eight years as president. At the start of the news conference, Merkel sought to break the ice, saying that it was “much better to talk to one another than about one another.”

Merkel said delicately that while she represents German interests, Trump “stands up for, as is right, American interests. That is our task respectively.” She said they were “trying to address also those areas where we disagree but tried to bring people together.”

“We need to be fair with each other,” Merkel said, saying both countries were expecting “that something good comes out of it for their own people.”

Trump sidesteps blame over wiretap row with Britain

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump defiantly refused to back down Friday from his explosive claim that Barack Obama wiretapped his phones, and sidestepped any blame for the White House decision to highlight an unverified report that Britain helped carry out the alleged surveillance.

In brushing off the diplomatic row with perhaps America’s closest ally, Trump also revived another: the Obama administration’s monitoring of German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s calls.

“At least we have something in common, perhaps,” Trump quipped during a joint news conference with Merkel.

Merkel, who was making her first visit to the White House since Trump took office, looked surprised by the president’s comment, which he appeared primed to deliver. The Obama administration’s spying infuriated Germany at the time and risked damaging the U.S. relationship with one of its most important European partners.

On Thursday, spokesman Sean Spicer turned to a Fox News analyst’s contention that GCHQ, the British electronic intelligence agency, had helped Obama wiretap Trump. Fox News anchor Shepard Smith said Friday that the network could not independently verify the reports from Andrew Napolitano, a former judge and commentator who has met with Trump.

The GCHQ vigorously denied the charges in a rare public statement, saying the report was “utterly ridiculous and should be ignored.”

Trump OKs changes to GOP health care bill, winning wider support

By ALAN FRAM and ERICA WERNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump agreed to add fresh Medicaid curbs to the House Republican health care bill Friday, bolstering the measure with support from some conservative lawmakers but leaving its prospects wobbly. House leaders discussed other amendments calibrated to round up votes and scheduled a showdown vote Thursday.

“I just want to let the world know I am 100 percent in favor” of the measure, Trump said at the White House after meeting around a dozen House lawmakers and shaking hands on revisions. “We’re going to have a health care plan that’s going to be second to none.”

While the rapid-fire events seemed to build momentum for the pivotal GOP legislation, its fate remained clouded. One leading House conservative said the alterations were insufficient and claimed enough allies to sink the measure, and support among moderates remained uncertain.

“My whip count indicates that there are 40 no’s,” enough to defeat the bill, said Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., who leads the hard-line House Freedom Caucus. He said the change “doesn’t move the ball more than a couple yards on a very long playing field.”

Across the Capitol, Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., facing re-election next year, became the fourth Republican senator to announce his opposition. That left Senate GOP leaders at least two votes shy of what they’d



Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, joined by, from left, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., chair of the Republican Conference, Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., and Rep. Pat Tiberi, R-Ohio, speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington, Friday.

need to prevail.

Congressional Democrats remain solidly opposed to the GOP effort.

Thursday will mark the seventh anniversary of when Obama signed his health overhaul into law, one of his milestone domestic achievements enacted over unanimous GOP opposition. Beyond that symbolism, Republican leaders hope to allow time for Congress to complete the measure before an early April recess exposes lawmakers to two weeks of lobbying and town hall pressure tactics by activists, doctors, hospitals and other opponents.

The Republican bill would kill much of former President Barack Obama’s health care law, including tax penalties for people who don’t buy insurance and its expansion of Medicaid, the federal-state health program

for the poor. It would create new tax credits that would be less generous than current federal subsidies for many consumers, and repeal levies on the wealthy and medical firms that helped finance Obama’s expansion of coverage to 20 million Americans.

Trump’s deal with lawmakers would let states impose work requirements on some of Medicaid’s roughly 60 million recipients. Details were initially unclear, but Republicans have discussed aiming them at healthy people with no dependents.

The agreement would also let states accept lump-sum federal payments for Medicaid, instead of an amount that would grow with the number of beneficiaries. The program currently costs the federal government around \$370

billion annually and covers costs no matter the amounts.

“These changes definitely strengthen our numbers,” said the House GOP’s top vote counter, Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, among Trump’s guests Friday. “But they also show that President Trump is all-in now” to help win converts.

Those accepting the agreement included Rep. Mark Walker, R-N.C., leader of the Republican Study Committee, a large group of House conservatives.

It seemed clear that GOP leaders remained short of the 216 votes they’ll need, and additional changes were in the works.

Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Calif., said he’d been assured by House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., that the bill’s tax credit would be adjusted to focus more benefits on lower-income people.

Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Ala., among those who met with Trump, said the president “told his people” to work on changes making the measure more generous for lower-earning and older Americans.

“Everything has to be a change that would increase the vote count,” Scalise said.

Conservatives seemed unlikely to achieve their demands that the GOP bill’s phase-out of Obama’s Medicaid expansion — now 2020 — be accelerated to next year and that the credit be denied people with little or no tax liability. Centrists remained wary of yanking constituents from coverage. Many represent states where voters have gained Medicaid and other insurance under the 2010 statute.

“We’ll see what changes they’re going to make,” said Rep. Charlie Dent, R-Pa.

In a report this week that prompted many GOP lawmakers to emerge as opponents, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the legislation would leave 24 million people uninsured in a decade, including 14 million next year, and boost out-of-pocket costs for many.

Heller joined three fellow GOP senators in opposing the bill: Susan Collins of Maine, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Mike Lee of Utah. Republican Sens. Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Ted Cruz of Texas have voiced strong objections, and Senate moderates don’t want to boot constituents off coverage.

Republicans have a 52-48 Senate majority.

Nevada has expanded Medicaid and GOP Gov. Brian Sandoval has expressed opposition to the Republican legislation.

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Craig Coleman grew up in a farming family. He has farmed for over 30 years in the Willamette Valley, and then later in Eastern Oregon (Hermiston) where he currently lives. A serial entrepreneur, Coleman enjoys starting new projects and watching them take flight into successful ventures. His latest, Ordinance Brewing which he manages, recently has grown from a small scale brewery, to one that has a 50 bbl. brewing system. Ordinance’s beer can be found in Oregon and Washington and soon will be found in Montana, Alaska, Idaho and surrounding states. So what is next? Well, Ordinance Distilling and Ordinance Cider of course! When not on the farm, or at the brewery, Coleman can be found checking up on Neighbor Dudes, an affiliated taproom in Hermiston or going to sporting events with his family.



Jean-Luke Alexander has been the Head Brewer at Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub in Pendleton Oregon since 2015. Jean-Luke graduated from Oregon State University in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in Food Science/ Fermentation Science, and he also holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration/Marketing. Before coming to Prodigal Son, Jean-Luke was a brewer at Bridgeport Brewing Company in Portland Oregon, a malt house operator at Great Western Malting in Vancouver Washington, and had early experience as a brewery intern at Bridgeport Brewing, Deschutes Brewery in Bend Oregon, and McMenamins in Corvallis Oregon.



Jean-Luke and his wife Alyssa moved to Pendleton in 2015, and they attempt to keep up with their two boys, Murray and Keaton.

Rodney Bullington is a native of the Pacific Northwest and grew up in agricultural towns in Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington. Over the past 21 years of his professional career Rodney has provided project management and leadership for ESPN.com, Walt Disney Internet Group, Microsoft Xbox Games Studios, and Pop Cap games. Rodney moved back home to Pendleton Oregon with his wife Kelli and son Truman. Rodney started his career with Pendleton Grain Growers, Inc. in 2012 where he was responsible for PGG’s IT, Safety, and Facilities (Infrastructure) teams and for the past two years McKennon Seed Plant. In 2015 Rodney and his wife Kelli purchased the Comrie’s Cadillac and Oldsmobile dealership building on the eastside of Pendleton with a vision for Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery and on November 19, 2016 that vision became a reality when it opened its doors. With a focus on agriculture and Eastern Oregon growers and produce they have partnered with Cliff and Judy Bracher to bring Pendleton and the surrounding areas quality craft distilled spirits.

For more information about the EO Forum, please contact: Karen Parker at 541-966-3177.

The EO Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders from Blue Mountain Community College, InterMountain Education Service District; the East Oregonian; American Association of University Women; and Harriet Isom; a former United States ambassador who also serves on the committee. This EO Forum program is offered as part of Blue Mountain Community College’s annual Arts and Culture Festival. For more information on the festival go to www.bluecc.edu.