

# Republican senators blink on a big chance to repeal 'Obamacare'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After seven years of emphatic campaign promises, Senate Republicans demonstrated they didn't have the stomach to repeal "Obamacare" on Wednesday when it actually counted.

The Senate voted 55-45 to reject legislation to throw out major portions of Barack Obama's law without replacing it.

Seven Republicans joined all Democrats in rejecting a measure by GOP Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky that would have repealed most of former President Obama's health care law, with a two-year delay but no replacement. Congress passed nearly identical legislation in 2015 and sent it to Obama, who unsurprisingly vetoed it.

Yet this time, with Republican President Donald Trump in the White House itching to sign the bill, the measure failed on the Senate floor.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that repealing "Obamacare" without replacing it would cost more than 30 million Americans their insurance coverage, and that was a key factor in driving away more Republican senators than Majority Leader Mitch McConnell could afford to lose in the closely divided Senate.

The result frustrated other GOP senators, some of whom expressed disbelief that their colleagues would flip-flop on legislation they had voted for only two years ago and long promised to voters. Of the current Republican senators, only moderate Susan Collins of Maine opposed the 2015 repeal bill.

"Make no mistake: Today's vote is a major disappointment to people who were promised full repeal," said Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska. "We still have a long, long way to go — both in health policy and in honesty."

Yet the outcome was hardly a



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, arrives for a vote as the Republican-run Senate rejected a GOP proposal to scuttle President Barack Obama's health care law and give Congress two years to devise a replacement on Wednesday at the Capitol in Washington.

shock in a Senate that's already shown that unity is elusive when it comes to dealing with Obamacare. The real-world implications of repeal have proven sobering to GOP senators answering to voters who've come to rely on expanded insurance coverage under the law.

It's not over yet. But what the party's senators might end up agreeing on instead is far from clear. They are plunging ahead with debate toward their unknown goal, pressured by an impatient president. By week's end Republicans hope to reach agreement among themselves, and eventually with the House, on some kind of repeal and replacement for the Obama law they have reviled for so long.

"We have to keep working hard," said McConnell, R-Ky. "We're determined to do everything we can to succeed. We know our constituents are counting on us."

One possibility taking shape in talks among senators was a "skinny repeal" that would abolish just a few of the key elements of Obama's law including its mandates that everyone purchase insurance and its taxes that all GOP senators can agree to oppose. But in a sign of the general

confusion, some said the tactic was aimed chiefly at moving the process forward into the purview of a committee of Senate-House bargainers while others expressed the hope that the House would swallow a "skinny bill" whole, freeing Congress to move on to other issues.

Either way, after weeks spent on the issue including false starts and near-death experiences that have eaten up months of Trump's presidency, the realization was dawning on senators that they may be unable to pass anything more complex for now than a lowest-common-denominator bill.

"At the end of the day, we've got to start somewhere. This is a start," said Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C.

The day's proceedings began with prodding from Trump, who's proven impatient and inconsistent throughout the health care debate and yet can claim some credit for resuscitating Senate talks after McConnell essentially declared them dead last week.

The president singled out Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who'd voted the day before against opening long-awaited

debate on the legislation, and also opposed a wide-ranging McConnell amendment Tuesday that offered a replacement for Obamacare and went down to defeat.

"Senator @lisamurkowski of the Great State of Alaska really let the Republicans, and our country, down yesterday. Too bad!" Trump wrote.

"I don't really follow Twitter that much," Murkowski remarked to reporters later with a shrug.

Murkowski was also among the seven GOP senators who voted "no" Wednesday on the repeal-only bill. The others were Collins, Shelley Moore Caputo of West Virginia, Dean Heller of Nevada, John McCain of Arizona, Rob Portman of Ohio and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee.

In a statement defending his vote, Portman wrote: "We need a rescue plan for Ohio families who are suffering under the status quo, not one that makes the health care system worse for Ohio families."

Senators were working their way through 20 hours of debate. At week's end, a "vote-a-rama" of rapid-fire voting on a mountain of amendments was expected before moving to final passage — of something.

Internal GOP differences remain over how broadly to repeal the law, how to reimburse states that would suffer from the bill's Medicaid cuts and whether to let insurers sell cut-rate, bare-bones coverage that falls short of the requirements.

While pressure and deal-making helped win over vacillating Republicans to begin debate, they remained fragmented over what to do next. Several pointedly left open the possibility of opposing the final bill if it didn't suit their states.

"It seems the Republican majority is no clearer on what the end game is, because there's no good way out of this," said Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

## BRIEFLY

### Spinning Ohio State Fair ride breaks apart; 1 dead, 7 hurt

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A swinging and spinning amusement park ride called the Fire Ball broke apart on the opening day of the Ohio State Fair on Wednesday, hurling people through the air, killing at least one and injuring seven others.

Three of the injured remained hospitalized in critical condition Wednesday night, authorities said at a news conference.

"The fair is about the best things in life, and tonight with this accident it becomes a terrible, terrible tragedy," said Republican Gov. John Kasich.

The man who was killed was one of several people who were thrown when the ride malfunctioned, Columbus Fire Battalion Chief Steve Martin said earlier.

Dramatic video captured by a bystander shows the ride swinging back and forth like a pendulum and spinning in the air when it crashes into something and part of the ride flies off, throwing riders to the ground.

### Boy Scouts chief expected a fiery Trump speech

NEW YORK (AP) — The Boy Scouts of America anticipated President Donald Trump would spark controversy with a politically tinged speech at its national jamboree in West Virginia but felt obliged to invite him out of respect for his office, its leader said Wednesday in his first public comments on the furor over Trump's remarks.

"If I suggested I was surprised by the president's comments, I would be disingenuous," Boy Scouts of America president Randall Stephenson said in a phone call with The Associated Press.

Other U.S. presidents have addressed past jamborees with speeches steering clear of partisan politics. To the dismay of many parents and former scouts, Trump, a Republican, promoted his political agenda and assailed his enemies in his speech Monday evening, inducing some of the more than 30,000 scouts in attendance to boo at the mention of Barack Obama, his Democratic predecessor.

Stephenson noted that every U.S. president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt has been invited to address the jamboree and said the Boy Scouts leadership gave "a lot of thought about Donald Trump coming to speak."

"Anyone knows his speeches get highly political — we anticipated that this could be the case," Stephenson said. "Do I wish the president hadn't gone there and hadn't been political? Of course."

Hoping to minimize friction, the Boy Scouts of America issued what Stephenson called "stringent guidelines" to staff members for how the audience should react to the speech.

## THURSDAY AFTERNOON & EVENING

Table with columns for time slots (12 PM, 12:30, 1 PM, 1:30, 2 PM, 2:30, 3 PM, 3:30, 4 PM, 4:30, 5 PM, 5:30, 6 PM, 6:30, 7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30) and rows for various channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS) listing programs like 'Paid Program', 'The Talk', 'The Doctors', 'The Wendy Williams Show', etc.

## JULY 27, 2017

Table with columns for time slots (12 PM, 12:30, 1 PM, 1:30, 2 PM, 2:30, 3 PM, 3:30, 4 PM, 4:30, 5 PM, 5:30, 6 PM, 6:30, 7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30) and rows for various channels (A&E, AMC, ANPL, CMT, CNBC, CNN, DISC, DISN, ESPN, ESPN2, FOX, FOC, FREE, GOLF, GSN, HALL, HGTV, HIST, LIFE, NICK, ROOT, SPIKE, SYFY, TBS, TCM, TLC, TNT, UNI, USA, WE, WGN, HBO, HBO2, HBO3, MAX, SHOW, STARZ, STZENC) listing programs like 'Criminal Minds', 'The Departed', 'Pit Bull Parolees', etc.

## THURSDAY LATE NIGHT & FRIDAY MORNING

Table with columns for time slots (12 AM, 12:30, 1 AM, 1:30, 2 AM, 2:30, 3 AM, 3:30, 4 AM, 4:30, 5 AM, 5:30, 6 AM, 6:30, 7 AM, 7:30, 8 AM, 8:30, 9 AM, 9:30, 10 AM, 10:30, 11 AM, 11:30) and rows for various channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS) listing programs like 'Friends', 'The Late Show', 'Tonight Show', 'Jimmy Kimmel', etc.