

# Bill Kaplan: GOP health bill worse

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Don't be fooled. Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell released a "new" bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act. And, its so-called replacement is every bit as cruel, draconian and stunningly inadequate as all the other House and Senate GOP plans. Washington Post blogger Jennifer Rubin, a conservative with a heart and smarts, opined: "There are some constants: All slash Medicaid; All reduce by tens of millions the number of insured Americans; All wind up transferring more cost to sicker, older and poorer Americans; Virtually all medical-provider and patient-advocate groups as well as AARP oppose all of them (and) All are really, really unpopular with voters." Amen!

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is expected to issue an updated analysis soon. Every CBO report on the multiple GOP bills has been telling – tens of millions more uninsured. The New York Times editorialized: "Experts say that the number (of uninsured) could rise (compared with previous versions of the bill) once Mr. McConnell's changes are factored in." Not surprisingly, another review validated the NYT.

Avalere Health, a well-respected consulting firm, presented an analysis of the Senate bill last week to the National Governors Association. The news was grim for Wisconsin: More uninsured, an increase in uncompensated care, possible decline in state revenue and loss of jobs. And, the Medicaid cuts for Wisconsin would be catastrophic: A reduction of federal Medicaid funding – 28 percent decline by 2036, losing \$18.1 billion 2020–36.

But Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson pretends that Wisconsin will not be "affected by any (Medicaid) cuts". However, on Sunday, Maine GOP Senator Susan Collins laid out the facts: "You can't take more than \$700 billion out of the Medicaid program and not think that it's going to have some kind of effect. This bill imposes fundamental sweeping changes in the Medicaid program, ... very deep cuts that would affect some of the most vulnerable people in our society, including disabled children and poor seniors. It would affect our rural hospitals and our nursing homes, and they would have a very hard time even staying in existence." Reality hits delusion. There's more.

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Earlier on Friday, Vice President Pence spoke at the National Governors Association to drum up support for the Senate health bill. He attacked Ohio GOP Governor John Kasich who does not support the bill. Pence falsely claimed that 60,000 disabled Ohioans were on a waiting list for Medicaid home-and-community-based services because the state expanded Medicaid. The Washington Post reported that Pence's allegation was not true. And, that "it alienated many at the meeting ...." A low blow backfired.

Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker was also there. He took multiple positions on the Senate health bill. "He predicted eventual success in the Senate"... (Washington Post); Walker also reportedly told other governors that the bill would not pass the Senate (NYT) and "Walker declined to say if he supports" the revised Senate bill (Time). You can't make this up. Meanwhile millions, including nearly 300,000 Wisconsinites, stand to lose health coverage.

*Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C. for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.*