

# Bill Kaplan: Kasich and Walker

Posted on Monday, Jul 10, 2017

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The GOP-led Congress returns this week to continue its mean-spirited effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The so-called Senate GOP replacement bill is really a tax cut for the wealthy (top 0.1 percent would get an average tax cut of \$250,000), while taking away health care coverage from 22 million, including 286,000 Wisconsinites. However, Ohio GOP Governor John Kasich, along with other GOP governors and some GOP senators, are opposed.

On Thursday, Kasich stood up for fiscal common sense and moral clarity, in successfully facing down the Ohio GOP-led legislature. Earlier, he had vetoed a legislative freeze of Medicaid expansion enrollment. As Republicans in the legislature sought to override Kasich, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and Ohio Hospital Association spoke out against the freeze, which threatened coverage for 500,000 Ohioans. The override effort failed. Kasich tweeted: "It's not an important win for me. It's an important win for Ohio."

Kasich understands that federally funded Medicaid expansion provides health care coverage for the poor (many working), disabled and the elderly. It is not a welfare program. Why? It covers many middle and working class folks who are so sick, disabled or old and frail that they need nursing home care. A lifeline to prevent bankruptcy. Moreover, Medicaid expansion in Ohio has reduced uncompensated hospital care, prevented cost-shifting to employers and private insurance plans, strengthened rural hospitals and generated budget savings for education and roads (jobs).

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Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker should pay attention to Wisconsin as

opposed to his political career. He has done everything possible to prevent the ACA from succeeding: refusing federal funds for a state exchange to sell ACA private insurance, and turning down federally funded Medicaid expansion (100 percent funding for 3 years, declining ultimately to 90 percent). Focused on running for president, Walker removed tens of thousands of Wisconsinites from Medicaid. They were told to enroll on the ACA federal exchange. Many did and got ACA help to buy private insurance. But all the while Walker keeps calling for ACA repeal! It gets crazier.

Walker replaced the tens of thousands thrown off Medicaid with tens of thousands of other Wisconsinites. Here's the rub. Walker defied common sense and math, turning down full federal reimbursement, instead using more state funding. Refusing Medicaid expansion made ideological and political points for Walker, while sending hard-earned federal taxes to other states. Moreover, the Senate GOP health bill cuts Medicaid by \$772 billion and the Trump budget cuts it further by \$610 billion. So much for the Walker "model" as he touts ACA repeal.

However, Kasich stands tall, saying: "I have deep concerns with details in the U.S. Senate's plan to fix America's healthcare system and the resources needed to help out our most vulnerable, including those who are dealing with drug addiction, mental illness and chronic health problems and have nowhere else to turn." Kasich has a heart and understands the Social Gospel. Walker not so much. Time for Wisconsinites to demand better and a change at the top.

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