Bill Kaplan: No backsliding on health care

Posted on Tuesday, May 9, 2017

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The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has become a popular success, with over 20 million Americans, including 243,000 Wisconsinites, gaining affordable quality health care coverage. But there has been unrelenting GOP hostility and sabotage. Years of calculated fearmongering, misrepresentations and lies culminated in the GOP-led House narrowly voting to repeal the ACA, with a so-called replacement. Trumpcare. All Wisconsin GOP representatives voted to kill the ACA, while all Wisconsin Democratic representatives were opposed.

Trump wanted a legislative win. Moreover, House Speaker Paul Ryan and White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus had become Trump's scapegoats, and needed to deliver for Trump. Panic. The White House collaborated with the House GOP Freedom Caucus on making Trump's replacement bill even worse. Trump played the tune: Must pass it before the public finds out what's in the bill.

The GOP bill went through the House with little debate, zero committee hearings, no amendments allowed on the floor and no waiting for the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) "score" (fiscal impact and rise in the uninsured). The U.S. as a plutocracy: "As the money torrent rises, it's no coincidence that for the first time in history, most members of Congress are millionaires …" (New York Times). Ryan and Trump could care less about regular folks.

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Trump falsely claimed "It's a great plan". But remember Trump's previous pledges: "Insurance for everybody" or "no one will lose coverage" and "no cuts to Medicaid".

Bold-faced lies. Trumpcare would mean: diminished health care protections, much higher insurance charges for the elderly, sick and folks with pre-existing conditions, many fewer covered by private insurance, millions kicked off Medicaid, huge tax cut for the wealthy and defunding Planned Parenthood. In a nutshell at least 24 million more uninsured, including 431,000 Wisconsinites (CBO and Urban Institute). There's more.

Trumpcare would put predatory insurance companies back in the driver's seat. States could get waivers to allow the sale of useless bare-bones health insurance coverage as well as price gouging the elderly, sick and others with pre-existing conditions. High insurance premiums — less folks covered. So to get votes in the House Ryan added inadequate funding for high-risk pools to supposedly cover those with pre-existing conditions.

Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker put his finger in the air, suggesting he was open to a waiver. A quick outcry and Walker pulled back, for now. And, despite Walker's ill-informed claims, when Wisconsin had a high-risk pool there were big problems: Only 21,000 were covered, leaving out tens of thousands, deductibles and premiums were too high for many and there was a 6-month waiting period (Modern Healthcare). Cancer does not wait. What to do?

Stop trying to repeal the ACA. Kill Trumpcare in the Senate. If you know people in Alaska, Maine, Nevada, Ohio and West Virginia contact them to speak with their GOP senators: Senators Lisa Murkowski, Susan Collins, Dean Heller, Rob Portman and Shelley Moore Capito. These GOP senators have been critical of Trumpcare. No backsliding on health care. Regular folks want to win.

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