

Bill Kaplan: Ryan's health plan, 24 million more uninsured

Posted on Tuesday, Mar 14, 2017

The column below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.

House Speaker Paul Ryan is an Ayn Rand Republican. He has derisively referred to Social Security as a “collectivist program” and a “welfare transfer” system. Remember Ryan’s schemes to privatize Social Security or transform Medicare into a parsimonious voucher program? And, cutting taxes for the rich is central to all of Ryan’s so-called reforms, including repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

To pay for ACA’s expansion of health care coverage, the Medicare payroll tax was increased for married couples earning over \$250,000 and for unmarried individuals with an income over \$200,000. In addition, there was a new ACA tax on investment income of the same high-income earners. “Those two taxes hit fewer than four million households making up the top 2.5 percent of taxpayers, according to IRS data” (Washington Post). But over 20 million Americans, including 243,000 Wisconsinites, gained health care coverage through the revenue raised. And, the life of the Medicare trust fund was extended.

However, the taxes on the rich “may help to explain the intensity of the anger felt by some people campaigning to repeal President Obama’s Affordable Care Act ...” (New York Times). Ryan is listening to the rich – and not to regular folks. The so-called GOP repeal and replace health care plan is “a major shift in taxes for low-and-middle income people while delivering a \$600 billion tax break, primarily to the rich” (Washington Post). Gone are the ACA taxes on the rich, with simultaneous draconian cuts in federal tax credits for regular folks to buy private health care insurance. And, ACA cost-sharing subsidies to pay for out-of-pocket costs (co-payments and deductibles) for middle and working class folks will be ended. Moreover, health insurers will be allowed to charge the elderly five times what younger enrollees pay. And, ACA-sponsored Medicaid expansion will be ended, with the traditional Medicaid program cut severely.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

“The people who stand to lose the most in tax credits under the House Republican health plan tended to support Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election, according to a new Upshot analysis” (a New York Times feature). The Upshot said: “the Republican plan offers less assistance to older and lower-income Americans, especially in rural areas ...” GOP-leaning rural Wisconsin counties that voted for Trump will see many lose health care coverage.

On Sunday, Speaker Ryan confessed to CBS’s “Face the Nation” that he didn’t know how many Americans, including Wisconsinites, would lose coverage. However, on Monday, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office issued a bombshell: the GOP health plan will increase the uninsured by 24 million! Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin is fighting Ryan’s plan. Senator Baldwin said: “The people of Wisconsin did not send me to Washington to take people’s health care away and I will not support repealing the guaranteed health insurance protections and care that people have today. I will not support higher costs, fewer people with health care coverage and more economic insecurity for Wisconsin families”. Amen!

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