

Bill Kaplan: Will safety net be shredded?

Posted on Monday, Feb 27, 2017

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

On Tuesday night, Trump will address Congress. Perhaps we will learn more about the Trump budget, including cuts to the safety net, domestic spending and humongous tax breaks for the rich and corporations. And, by mid-March the White House is supposed to release a budget outline. Will Trump release a health plan?

Trump has not intimidated voters into silence. The Women's March in D.C. and protests across the nation, including nearly 100,000 in Madison, sent a strong rebuff to Trump and the GOP, as did spontaneous protests at airports against Trump's cruel immigration orders. More recently voters have organized themselves at the grassroots to support the Affordable Care Act (ACA). GOP members of Congress at town hall events heard from thousands of constituents asking to see a GOP plan to pay for affordable quality health care coverage.

Wisconsin GOP Representative Jim Sensenbrenner also had a town hall meeting. He admitted that after 7 years a GOP health plan was "still under discussion". However, he was dismissive of Wisconsinites, terrified of losing their health care coverage if the ACA is repealed (nearly 243,000 Wisconsinites have ACA private insurance coverage). Sensenbrenner complained that his critics represented "a vocal minority". But on Friday Trump trumped Sensenbrenner, falsely claiming that the ACA covers "very few people". In fact, over 20 million are covered.

>> 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.](#)

No surprise that ACA support is growing, with a plurality now favoring it, according to the Kaiser Foundation. And, former GOP House Speaker John Boehner said: "In

the 25 years that I served ... Republicans never, ever, not one time agreed on what a health care proposal should like. Not once. And, all this happy talk ... about repeal, repeal, repeal – yeah, we'll do replace, replace – I started laughing” Moreover, the New York Times panned GOP House Speaker Paul Ryan’s outline, saying it “would provide insurance that is far inferior, shift more medical costs onto families and cover far fewer people”.

And, GOP governors in 16 states that expanded Medicaid under ACA are not eager to face the wrath of voters whose health coverage is deep-sixed. Then there is Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker, talking out of both sides of his mouth. On Friday, Walker said: “You can’t cut Medicaid”. But he qualified that, saying “Medicaid is for people living in poverty”. News flash. Medicaid covers the poor (many working), but also middle class disabled and elderly folks who run out of funds and need nursing home care. The Wisconsin State Journal reported that “the disabled and elderly” in Wisconsin “account for 64 percent of the cost” (of Medicaid). There’s more.

Trump-appointed budget director Mick Mulvaney helped lead the 2013 government shutdown to defund the ACA. He wants to raise the retirement age for Social Security to 70! Will Social Security be privatized? Mulvaney wants to limit eligibility for Medicare, and is leading the charge to eviscerate all domestic spending. Keep protesting – and vote to hold Congress accountable in 2018. Let’s stand together for opportunity and economic security for regular folks.

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