

Wisconsin delegates split along party lines in House health care vote

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Wisconsin's House GOP Republicans are hailing the chamber's passage Thursday of the American Health Care Act, saying it's an important step toward the GOP promise of replacing Obamacare.

The bill's passage — on a 217-213 vote — follows weeks of negotiations after House Speaker Paul Ryan pulled it in March, lacking enough GOP support. An amendment last week revived the bill and brought onboard the conservative Freedom Caucus, and yet another amendment this week wooed some GOP moderates.

All House Democrats voted against the bill, with 20 Republicans joining them. Dems and several Republicans are slamming the AHCA as a massive tax cut for the rich that rolls back protections for those with pre-existing conditions and kicks millions of people off their health care. U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, called it “a matter of life or death for my constituents.”

Ryan, R-Janesville, urged his colleagues on the floor Thursday to reject the “status quo under Obamacare” and “raise our gaze and set a bold course for this country.”

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“This bill delivers on the promises we have made to the American people,” Ryan said. “You know, a lot of us have been waiting seven years to cast this vote.”

The four other House GOP members from Wisconsin approved the bill.

U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Menomonee Falls, called the AHCA a “free-market solution that works for the people, not the government.”

In a statement, U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher railed against issues the Affordable Care

Act has faced and said the “federal government’s one-size fits all approach is failing.” The best path forward, he said, is encouraging states to work on health care innovations that work in their area.

Gallagher, R-Green Bay, also said the bill is “far from perfect” and that there are several improvements he’d like to see as it moves to the Senate, such as boosting the credits that low-income families get to pay for their health care.

Meanwhile, U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, called the Affordable Care Act a “proven disaster,” citing higher premiums and insurers pulling out of the health care exchanges in parts of the country.

“This new bill still covers pre-existing conditions, while easing the burdens of Obamacare that have been forced onto so many of our families,” he said. “With our vote today, the House has ensured that individuals and families will no longer be forced into expensive, inadequate Obamacare plans they do not want and cannot afford.”

U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy, R-Wausau, told Fox News after the vote it was a “getting a sane healthcare system that will look out for the American people and families instead of bureaucrats here in Washington.”

Dems blasted the bill, with Moore calling on the Senate to “use the common sense and empathy that is severely lacking across the aisle in the House.”

She cited Congressional Budget Office projections that 24 million people would lose their insurance by 2026; that figure is from CBO’s report on the original bill, as it hasn’t scored the latest version. She said the bill would have “a crushing impact on people with pre-existing conditions,” those with disabilities and that it would also threaten those who get health insurance from their employers.

She also criticized a provision in the bill letting states apply for waivers to decide what they consider to be an “essential health benefit,” which the Affordable Care Act defined to include mental health coverage and maternity care, for example.

“Put simply, no one is safe from the fallout of this catastrophe in the making,” she said.

U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, said “Trumpcare is a disaster,” noting it lets insurers charge significantly higher amounts for older Americans while giving

“\$600 billion in tax cuts to the wealthiest in this country, insurance companies and Big Pharma.”

U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, also criticized Republicans for voting on the bill before getting an updated report from CBO on the costs and effects it would have. He also cited the CBO’s projections on people who will lose coverage under previous version of the bill.

“It will allow critical protections for people with pre-existing conditions to be taken away, lead to skyrocketing premiums for older Wisconsinites, and put Medicare four years closer to going bankrupt,” he said.

See the roll call vote:

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2017/roll256.xml>

See more reaction in Press Releases:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2017/05/04/?arcf=cat:19>