

# Bill Kaplan: Trump and Walker rule by deception

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Trump and Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker rule by deception. Case in point. “Trump has repeatedly asserted 61 times that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was failing or on the edge of disaster or in serious trouble. But the (nonpartisan) Congressional Budget Office has said that the Obamacare (ACA) exchanges, despite well-documented issues, are not imploding and are expected to remain stable for the foreseeable future” (Washington Post January 21, 2018). Walker has tweeted the same falsehood: “Obamacare is collapsing. Washington has failed to fix it. Wisconsin will lead” (February 19, 2018).

However, Kaiser Health News reported that despite “a shorter time frame, a sharply reduced federal budget for marketing and assistance, and confusion resulting from months of repeal-and-replace debate” 11.8 million, including 227,572 Wisconsinites, enrolled in ACA health insurance plans for 2018. Moreover, states running their own exchanges saw an uptick. Note: Walker refused federal funding for a Wisconsin exchange. There’s more.

Trump continues his “secret plan” (Politico) to undermine the ACA: ending the individual mandate, conniving to ignore the law by not reimbursing insurers for cost-sharing reductions provided for by the ACA and planning to allow insurers to sell temporary plans (up to 364 days) that provide inadequate, bare-bones coverage. All of this will encourage younger and healthy people to not buy ACA insurance. Premiums will then rise for the elderly, sick and others remaining in ACA plans. What to do?

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For starters, accept ACA Medicaid expansion everywhere and federal funding covering 90 percent of the cost. 32 states, including 18 that are GOP-led, have done so. Moreover, the Virginia GOP-led House just passed Medicaid expansion. But Walker, leading from behind, still opposes Medicaid expansion, which would save Wisconsin \$1 billion over 6 years and cover 83,000 more Wisconsinites (Legislative Fiscal Bureau). Walker falsely claims that the federal funding is unreliable. Most states disagree.

Walker did get legislative approval to tap into other ACA federal funding for a reinsurance program to help pay insurers with high-cost enrollees so premiums will not rise sharply. But it's a problematic and piecemeal approach. What's needed is an end to ACA sabotage, Medicaid expansion, a buy-in to Wisconsin Medicaid (BadgerCare program) regardless of income, more oversight of insurers and specifics on how Walker will pay Wisconsin's share of a reinsurance program. Meanwhile, more deception eclipses the ACA.

The Russia investigation is picking up steam, with more than 100 criminal counts against 19 individuals, and four plea deals. Walker says he is "not interested". And Trump tweets "fake news" and it's a "witch hunt". But the nation is heading toward a constitutional crisis. Washington Post conservative columnist Michael Gerson opined: "One is left wishing that Obamacare (ACA) covered spine transplants. The Republican-led House is now an adjunct of the White House. ... And what to make of (House Speaker Paul) Ryan...? I have been a consistent defender of his good intentions. But after the 17th time saying 'He knows better', it dawns that he may not." Deception rules in D.C. and Wisconsin.

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