

# Bill Kaplan: Why voters are cynical about politicians

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Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker's antics make many voters cynical about politicians. Case in point. Walker has opposed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) from the get-go, derisively calling the ACA "Obamacare". He failed in getting the Supreme Court to declare the ACA unconstitutional. Moreover, Walker refused federal funding for a state exchange to sell private insurance and Medicaid expansion. He continues to support sabotage and repeal of the ACA.

So more than a little skepticism is warranted regarding Walker's support of a federal-state funded reinsurance program to help private insurers with high-cost enrollees so premiums will not rise sharply. The idea is sound and part of the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit program and the ACA. But unlike bipartisan support for Medicare Part D reinsurance, the GOP-led Congress sought to limit and sabotage ACA reinsurance. Nary a tweet of protest from Walker.

Moreover, Walker's reinsurance proposal has more holes than Swiss cheese. The state funding portion (up to \$80 million - Legislative Fiscal Bureau) would come from "savings" in the Medicaid program. And, the reinsurance plan legislation binds future governors from expanding Medicaid "unless the state legislature has passed legislation to allow the expansion ... ". Once again Walker and the GOP-led state legislature have thrown an ideological hissy fit. Why?

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32 states, including 17 GOP-led and most of the Midwest, have Medicaid expansion. Aside from providing health coverage for millions, the generous federal funding (90

percent of the cost) has allowed those states to spend more state monies on education and roads. Virginia with a Democratic governor and GOP-led legislature, is on the brink of passing Medicaid expansion. 19 Virginia GOP state legislators voted for Medicaid expansion. If Wisconsin expanded Medicaid it would save \$1 billion over 6 years and cover 83,000 more Wisconsinites (Legislative Fiscal Bureau).

Will Walker do the right thing? No. As Walker signed his reinsurance bill, he gave the go ahead to Wisconsin GOP Attorney General Brad Schimel's scheme to yet again go to a federal court to try to have the ACA declared unconstitutional. Health care expert and law professor Timothy Jost called it a "nuisance lawsuit". Jost went on to say: "It's politics. It's not law." A breathtakingly cynical stunt by Walker and Schimel.

Typical for Walker and not limited to health care. Cynicism is the name of Walker's game. Case in point. When Walker was running for president he hobnobbed with Russian banker Alexander Torshin, deputy governor of Russia's central bank, at the National Rifle Association (NRA) convention (Washington Post). What did they talk about? The FBI is now investigating whether Torshin illegally funneled money to the NRA to help Trump win the presidency in 2016 (McClatchy). Note: the NRA spent at least \$30 million to elect Trump and has long supported Walker. After the Florida school massacre it was "thoughts and prayers" time yet again. No Wisconsin ban on military-style rifles or raising the age to buy those weapons. Just crocodile tears. No wonder voters are cynical about politicians like Walker.

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