

# Bill Kaplan: Democrats fix equity and health care problems

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Underlying partisan gridlock and venom in Washington, D.C. (and Madison) is the collapse of the Republican Party. The GOP has become a cult bent to Trump's will. The GOP is neither a party nor conservative. Trump has put his moniker on congressional Republicans. They have abandoned long-held principles: fiscal discipline (red ink everywhere), free trade (back to 1930s tariffs and trade wars), remaking the party of Lincoln (acquiescence and support of Trump's racism) and not interfering with citizens' private lives.

For example, Republicans in Alabama have just adopted a draconian law, all but outlawing abortion. No exception period for incest or rape. The silence of Republicans nationally is deafening. Meanwhile, the Democratic-led House passed legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. All Wisconsin Democratic representatives voted yes. All Wisconsin GOP representatives voting were opposed (Representative Sean Duffy was a no-show); oblivious that Wisconsin in 1982, led by GOP Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus, passed a civil rights bill adding sexual orientation to its anti-discrimination laws. Wisconsin Democratic Representative Mark Pocan said: "Close to four decades ago, Wisconsin led the nation as the first state to enact legislation barring discrimination based on sexual orientation ... ."

Further, it is on health care that Republicans have cast aside everything. The foundation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was built on conservative GOP principles: the individual mandate requiring Americans to have health insurance and the use of tax credits, to help those who needed it, to buy private insurance on exchanges. Ideas supported and implemented by then Massachusetts GOP Governor Mitt Romney.

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But Trump and congressional Republicans are hell-bent on eviscerating the ACA by having a federal court declare the entire law unconstitutional, or using sabotage to limit its effectiveness. The circus ringmaster of the federal lawsuit was former Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker (state Democratic Governor Tony Evers withdrew Wisconsin from the GOP multi-state lawsuit). Millions of Americans, including 205,118 Wisconsinites covered by ACA private insurance would lose their coverage. Moreover, 852,000 Wisconsinites with preexisting conditions would lose access to affordable comprehensive health insurance (*Kaiser Family Foundation*). And, thousands of young adult Wisconsinites would lose coverage from their parents' health insurance.

The Democratic-led House, Democratic governors and two GOP state attorneys general, Dave Yost of Ohio and Tim Fox of Montana, are fighting back in federal court to save the ACA. Moreover, the Democratic-led House is passing legislation to end Trump's sabotage of the ACA. On Thursday, the House passed a number of health care provisions: blocked sale of "junk insurance" with inadequate benefits and no coverage of preexisting conditions, restored funding for ACA advertising and outreach to help Americans enroll and reformed the sale of generic drugs to lower drug prices. All Wisconsin Democratic representatives voted yes, while all Wisconsin GOP representatives were opposed.

Wisconsin Democratic Representative Ron Kind said: "Today, the House took action ... aimed at lowering drug costs, strengthening protections for people ... with preexisting conditions and expanding access to care." Spot on.

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