



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on April 3, 2017

After Golfing With Trump, Rand Paul Optimistic on ObamaCare Repeal

Despite threats from some of his top advisers and even from President Trump himself that he would try to defeat some leading congressional conservatives in primaries, the president had a golf outing with Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) Sunday that brightened hopes that the rift between the administration and congressional conservatives could be healed — and a new effort to kill ObamaCare launched.



Senator Paul ran for president in 2016, as did his father, Congressman Ron Paul, before him in 2012 and 2008, and he has been a stiff critic of the Trump-Ryan bill on healthcare that failed last week in the House of Representatives.

After a round of golf with the president, however, Paul (shown) told reporters that he is “very optimistic” that party leaders are “getting closer” on a compromise.

“We had a great day with the president,” Paul said, in reference to his golf date at Trump National Golf Club in northern Virginia with Trump and Mick Mulvaney, the White House director of the Office of Management and Budget.

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Paul put forward his own ObamaCare replacement bill before the plan favored by House Speaker Paul Ryan and Trump failed in the House last week. When the House Freedom Caucus, made up of the most conservative members of the House, uniformly opposed the Trump-Ryan plan as inadequate, Trump and some of his supporters in and out of government threatened its members with challenges in their primary re-election efforts.

Specifically targeted was Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich.). Trump’s director of social media, Dan Scavino, Jr., said of Amash: “Defeat him in a primary.” Another Caucus member, Rep. Mark Sanford (R-S.C.) said Mulvaney told him, “The president asked me to look you square in the eyes and to say that he hoped that you voted ‘no’ on this bill so he could run [a primary challenger] against you in 2018.” Trump reportedly told Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), “Oh Mark, I’m coming for you.”

One unnamed White House official told reporters, “Our view is: There’s nothing more clarifying as the smell of Air Force One jet fuel. So if he [Trump] needs to bring in the plane and do a rally, he’s going to think about doing that.”

Amash’s response to the threat of a primary challenger was, “Bring it on.”

In the midst of all of this acrimony, Paul remained optimistic that a compromise could still be forged between the White House and conservatives in Congress who want to repeal ObamaCare, and replace it with a system with more characteristics of a free market.

Senator Paul, an ophthalmologist, was first elected to the Senate in 2010 as an avowed “Tea Party” candidate. It is thought that he has credibility in two ways: (1) he is a medical doctor, and is therefore



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quite familiar with the health care industry; and (2) he is a free market conservative with libertarian tendencies and the son of Ron Paul, another medical doctor who was a long-time congressman and is still a staunch defender of liberty.

In the plan put forward earlier by Senator Paul, the individual mandate would be eliminated, and the ban on insurance companies denying coverage for people with pre-existing conditions would be ended. In its place, there would be a two-year “open enrollment” period during which persons with pre-existing conditions could not be denied coverage. After that time, the law would go back to as it was before ObamaCare. His proposal would let insurance companies offer plans less expensive than those mandated by ObamaCare, and would eliminate the so-called essential health benefit requirements of ObamaCare. Under Paul’s proposal, insurance companies would be allowed to sell plans across state lines. He would also provide a \$5,000-per-person tax credit to be applied to a health savings account (HSA) that could then be used to pay for insurance. Small businesses and individuals could pool together to purchase health plans.

Paul was a strong critic of the Ryan-Trump bill, dubbing it “ObamaCare lite,” arguing that his plan goes further in not only repealing the ObamaCare law, but replacing it with a bill that would put the health care industry into a free market alternative. Critics of ObamaCare argue that consumers are stuck with a system that is forcing prices up, and reducing options.

In the immediate aftermath of the defeat of the bill pushed by Trump and Ryan, Trump suggested that House Freedom Caucus members were responsible for the bill’s defeat, and he was giving up on legislation to deal with health care. Trump said that he would revisit the topic after ObamaCare “explodes.”

However, the president now seems to be listening to what Rand Paul wants to do. He tweeted before their golf date, “Talks on Repealing and Replacing ObamaCare are, and have been, going on, and will continue until such time as a deal is hopefully struck.”

Trump has said, “One way or the other, I promised the people great health care. We are going to have great health care in this country. Now, it will be in one form or another. It will be a repeal and replace of ObamaCare which is the deal that is being negotiated now.”

The meeting with Paul is significant since it was no secret that the Kentucky senator had met earlier with House Freedom Caucus members to support their opposition to the Ryan-Trump bill, known as the American Health Care Act. After golfing with Paul, Trump echoed Paul’s optimism for a revival of the effort to kill ObamaCare and replace it, tweeting, “Anybody (especially Fake News media) who thinks that Repeal & Replace of ObamaCare is dead does not know the love and strength in R Party!”

Not a lot of “love” has been seen in the back and forth between Trump and the 35-member Freedom Caucus to this point; however, the Paul golf outing, along with other comments by Trump and Freedom Caucus members, may indicate that both sides are pulling back from open intra-party warfare.

Trump, for example, told the *Financial Times* that members of the Freedom Caucus are “friends.” But he added that he might still deal with the Democrats, if necessary.

On CNN’s “State of the Union,” Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), a prominent member of the Freedom Caucus, explained the group’s reasons for opposing the Trump-Ryan proposal. “Tweets and statements and blame don’t change facts. And the facts remain the same. When you look at the document, when you look at the [Trump-Ryan] legislation, it doesn’t repeal ObamaCare.”



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But with White House official Stephanie Grisham characterizing the Sunday golf outing as one in which several issues would be discussed at Trump's club, with health care as "a big topic," hope has been renewed that fences can be mended and the Big Government ObamaCare law can be eliminated from the statute books.

While it seems now that the relationships between Trump and such Freedom Caucus members such as Justin Amash and Mark Sanford are strained, one must remember that Trump and his top primary challenger, Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) have apparently overcome an extremely bitter primary to work together. And, it should also be remembered that in one of the early Republican presidential primary debates, Trump even made fun of Paul's curly hair.

And now, they are playing golf together — and more importantly, having a serious discussion about abolishing ObamaCare.

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul talking to reporters after the golf outing: AP Images



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