



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 29, 2018

Is Congress About to Take Up ObamaCare Repeal Again?

Is ObamaCare repeal on the GOP agenda again? Several think tanks and a former senator hope to make it so, but Congress — especially the Senate — may not have the appetite for it this year.

On Friday, the [Wall Street Journal](#) reported that a group of conservative think tanks, including the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Galen Institute, and the Manhattan Institute, plans to release a proposal for new Affordable Care Act (ACA) “repeal” legislation in June.



“The nascent proposal would end the ACA’s expansion of Medicaid and funnel money to states in the form of block grants,” wrote the *Journal*. “It would likely include some current ACA consumer protections, such as financial assistance to some people who can’t afford coverage, as well as an expansion of health savings accounts.”

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This hardly qualifies as repeal of the 2010 healthcare law; indeed, as the paper noted, it has been criticized by other conservative groups for being “too centrist.” But some Republicans believe they need to be seen as doing something about ObamaCare in an election year in which Democrats are using the law’s ongoing failures against them.

“Democrats are using health care to beat Republicans, and we have nothing,” former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, a Republican who is leading the charge for the proposal, told the *Journal*. “The idea we can go into the election where we have some premiums going up 91 percent, and there’s something we could have done, is stupid politics.”

Of course, proposing legislation and getting Congress to take it up are two entirely different matters. According to the [Daily Caller](#), as things stand right now, “there isn’t much evidence that” Congress is prepared to act on the think tanks’ proposal:

After a number of conversations with GOP Senate aides, The Daily Caller News Foundation has learned there isn’t likely to be a rollout anytime soon — given there isn’t any legislative text floating around the upper chamber.

“It’s unclear what the former senator and these outside groups plan to unveil, given they have no bill text of their own and you have to be a current member of Congress to introduce legislation,” a senior GOP Senate aide told TheDCNF.

Senator Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) told the *Journal* that he is “completely supportive of what the outside groups are doing” and “will absolutely be a real champion to put that forward.” He is, however, likely to face resistance from his fellow Republicans, including, most importantly, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), who told the newspaper, “The only way I would go back to an issue like that is if I thought we had the votes to actually make a law.”



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Unfortunately, repeal prospects have only worsened since the Senate failed to accomplish it last year. With the election of Senator Doug Jones (D-Ala.), the GOP has just a two-seat majority in the upper chamber. And trying to pass the bill under budget reconciliation, which would require only a majority vote, could complicate matters further.

Even the relatively mild ObamaCare reforms being proposed by the think tanks are likely to encounter pushback from Republicans. Representative Ryan Costello (R-Pa.) told the *Journal* he didn't "see how it would be positive. It would rile up the left, who's tripled down on protecting all the positive elements of [the ACA], and it probably would be a reminder to those frustrated on the right that we didn't get it done."

The fact that the bill on which the proposal is based, which was sponsored by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Bill Cassidy (R-La.), also failed to pass the Senate last year does not bode well for its prospects this time around.

"We don't have the votes. Graham-Cassidy is dead," Cassidy said in a statement. "My focus is on developing new ideas to lower health care costs. I'll be ready when the votes are there in support of making health care affordable again."

That will depend on electing more congressman and senators who take their oath of allegiance to the Constitution, which nowhere grants the federal government any say-so over healthcare, seriously.

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