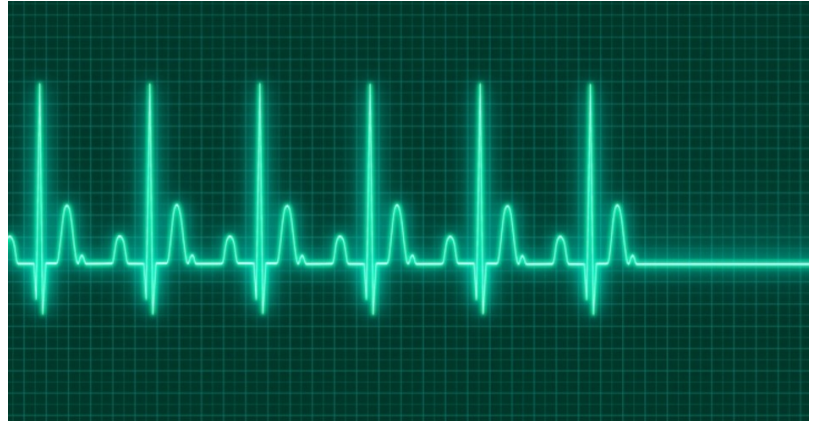




Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 19, 2017

ObamaCare Repeal Without Replacement All but Dead

The brief glimmer of hope that ObamaCare would actually be repealed, not merely replaced with a Republican me-too version, has quickly been all but extinguished. Three GOP senators — Alaska’s Lisa Murkowski, West Virginia’s Shelley Moore Capito, and Maine’s Susan Collins — have already announced their opposition to passing a bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) without replacing it.



“I do not think that it’s constructive to repeal a law that is so interwoven within our health care system without having a replacement plan in place,” Collins said in a [statement](#). “We can’t just hope that we will pass a replacement within the next two years. Repealing without a replacement would create great uncertainty for individuals who rely on the ACA and cause further turmoil in the insurance markets.”

Monday evening, after it became clear that the Republican leadership’s ObamaCare replacement bill would [go down to defeat](#), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) [announced](#) that the upper chamber would instead vote on “a repeal of Obamacare with a two-year delay to provide for a stable transition period.” The legislation, he said, would be based on a bill Congress sent in 2015 to President Barack Obama, who vetoed it. (Collins voted against that bill, too.)

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By Tuesday afternoon, Murkowski, Capito, and Collins had all declared that they not only opposed the repeal bill but would vote against a motion to allow it to proceed to debate.

“My position on this issue is driven by its impact on West Virginians,” Capito said in a [statement](#). “With that in mind, I cannot vote to repeal Obamacare without a replacement plan that addresses my concerns and the needs of West Virginians.”

Murkowski, in a [press release](#), detailed the many failures of ObamaCare in Alaska, including skyrocketing health-insurance premiums and deductibles and a loss of insurance carriers. But, she added, “Repealing the ACA without a clear path forward just creates confusion and greater uncertainty.”

“I cannot vote to proceed to repeal the ACA without reform that allows people the choice they want, the affordability they need and the quality of care they deserve,” she said.

It would be easy to dismiss the senators’ concerns as simply the result of their moderate-to-liberal views; their cumulative [Freedom Index](#) scores range from 40 percent (Collins) to 48 percent (Murkowski). Yet the Congressional Budget Office forecast that ObamaCare repeal would significantly increase both the number of uninsured and the premiums on individual-market policies (mostly because of the loss of subsidies), an estimate that, if accurate, should concern anyone.

None of this is to say that ObamaCare should remain the law of the land. The ACA has, as Murkowski pointed out, contributed mightily to rising premiums, and it still leaves millions of Americans uninsured while increasing government control of healthcare. Plus, it’s unconstitutional. Repeal would certainly be welcome.



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However, economist Ryan McMaken observed in a [piece](#) for the *American Conservative*, “repeal-only proposals do little to actually address the problem of upward spiraling healthcare costs generated by government mandates and subsidies.”

“Thanks to more than 70 years of government meddling, the American healthcare system was already broken long before Obamacare came along,” he explained. “Because of this, returning to the status quo of eight years ago would hardly be a victory for freedom and free markets.”

“If GOP politicians really wanted to do something to improve access, reduce costs, and generally improve the lives of Americans, they’d quit with the grandiose repeal schemes,” he wrote. “They’d simply focus on passing reforms that open up healthcare markets to competition, and allow consumers to circumvent the subsidized and regulated healthcare system.”

McConnell appears determined to proceed with his repeal bill nonetheless. According to [CNN](#), he “announced Tuesday night on the Senate floor that Republicans would hold a procedural vote on the health care bill ‘early next week.’”

But will the bill pass? “Asked by CNN what would need to change given that leadership currently lacks the 50 ‘yes’ votes from senators to pass even a procedural vote, Senate GOP whip John Cornyn responded: ‘A little passage of time.’”

With strategy like this, Republicans couldn’t beat a three-year-old at tiddlywinks.

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