

Obama health law faces Republican-led repeal vote

July 11 2012, by Michael Mathes

US lawmakers will vote Wednesday to repeal President Barack Obama's health care law, as Republicans unleash a barrage of attacks aimed at inspiring support for wiping out the landmark reforms.

Democrats have slammed the effort -- the 31st vote to repeal part or all of the [Affordable Care](#) Act -- as a brash political show, but acknowledged it's all but certain to pass the House of Representatives.

"We're going to lose. Republicans are going to vote in lockstep," the number two House Democrat Steny Hoyer told reporters as lawmakers made their cases for or against the reforms signed into [law](#) in 2010 and upheld as constitutional by the Supreme Court late last month.

Hoyer also acknowledged there would be some Democrats voting to repeal the law that brings the world's richest nation closer than ever to universal health care for its citizens.

"I think we'll lose some as we did before, not a lot," he said, referring to a full-repeal vote in early 2011. The number could be higher Wednesday, with some Democrats in heated battles for November reelection in swing states.

Republicans are touting the defections as a sign of broader discontent with Obama's reforms.

"Democrats are hearing back home this bill is hurting small businesses,"

senior House Republican Kevin McCarthy said of Democrats he believes will vote for repeal.

Republicans say "Obamacare" places unfair financial burdens on small companies whose costs they say are rising under the [health care law](#), charges the White House and Democrats refute.

And with Mitt Romney, who is challenging Obama for the White House in November, insisting that the law's mandate that all Americans obtain [health insurance](#) or pay a fine amounts to a massive tax hike, the issue is a pivotal campaign battle front.

The vote, however, is dead in the water. Democrats control the Senate, and the White House has informed Congress that the president would veto the legislation should it reach his desk.

"The last thing the Congress should do is refight old political battles and take a massive step backward by repealing basic protections that provide security for the middle class," the [White House](#) statement said in a statement.

"Right now, the Congress needs to work together to focus on the economy and creating jobs."

And yet top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell said he wanted to pursue a repeal vote in the Senate too, even though a similar bill failed last year despite every Republican supporting it.

Congresswoman Nan Hayworth said that while she lauded the goals of the Affordable Care Act, "it is not the time for Washington... to impose \$2 trillion worth of federally generated cost at a time when we have a massive debt that we already can not afford."

The health care law, she said, "is nothing short of economic malpractice."

Such was the tone on the House floor, where Democrat Edward Markey slammed the "Republican reflux" of futile hammering against a bill Democrats argue most Americans don't want repealed.

[Health care](#) reform is now enshrined "right alongside Social Security and Medicare," he said of two cherished entitlement programs.

"And yet, the Republicans keep trying to take away or take apart the benefits of this law."

Secretary of Health and Human Service Kathleen Sebelius issued a dire warning Tuesday about the "devastating effects" that would hit millions of Americans should the Republican repeal come into force.

Ending the law would "take us back to the days when insurance companies were not accountable to anyone," she said in the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Under Obamacare, "all Americans with insurance are now protected from some of the insurance industry's worst abuses, like having their coverage canceled when they get sick just because they made a mistake on an application, or facing a lifetime dollar cap on their benefits," she said.

Repeal, Democrats have argued, would also mean an estimated 30 million low-income Americans would lose the health insurance guaranteed them under law, programs such as free cancer screenings would be abolished, and three million young adults may be dropped from their parents' plans.

When asked Tuesday whether a full-court press for repeal could turn off undecided voters who might have become used to the law, House Speaker John Boehner insisted Americans were set against it.

"We are resolved to have this law go away. And we're going to do everything we can to stop it," he said.

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