

House bill targets health law, Planned Parenthood funds

October 9 2015, by Alan Fram

The House Budget Committee approved Republican legislation Friday that would scuttle President Barack Obama's health care law, block federal payments to Planned Parenthood—and likely lead to a presidential veto.

The measure is the latest of many GOP measures that have been aimed at both targets but that Democrats have managed to derail in the Senate. This time, Republicans are using a special process that would prevent Democratic senators from using filibusters, or procedural delays, to kill the measure.

That means there's a strong chance the legislation will reach Obama—who would be certain to veto it. Republicans are pushing it anyway as a vehicle to highlight their views to conservatives ahead of next year's presidential and congressional elections.

"Our goal is to save the country from this disastrous law and start over again," Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., the panel chairman, said of the 2010 health overhaul Republicans have opposed from the start.

The committee approved the bill by a party-line 21-11 vote.

The Congressional Budget Office, Congress' official fiscal analyst, says the bill would save \$79 billion over the next decade. Some 15 million fewer people would have health care coverage under the measure, the office said.

The legislation would repeal the law's requirements that individuals buy health insurance and many employers provide it to workers. It would also end the law's taxes on medical devices and on high-cost health insurance plans.

Most of the savings would come from reduced federal costs: With fewer Americans insured, the government would spend less to subsidize lower-income people's medical costs.

Democrats say the bill would make the law unworkable while erasing money needed to pay its costs.

"Here we are trying to do the bidding of a faction of this House that just can't come to terms with the fact that" the health overhaul has been upheld by the Supreme Court, said the committee's top Democrat, Rep. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland.

Republicans have tried cutting Planned Parenthood's federal funds for years. Their efforts accelerated this summer because of secretly recorded videos showing the group's officials describing how they sometimes harvest fetal tissue for research.

Planned Parenthood gets roughly a third of its \$1.3 billion annual budget from the federal government, chiefly Medicaid reimbursements for seeing lower-income women.

The bill would end Planned Parenthood's federal money for a year and transfer it to community health centers, which Republicans say would mean women would retain access to needed services.

The budget office has estimated that from 5 percent to 25 percent of Planned Parenthood's clients, or from 130,000 to 650,000 people, would have reduced access to family planning services if the organization's

money was blocked.

Transferring those funds to local health centers would make no significant dent in the numbers of people losing those services because the government probably couldn't distribute the money in time, the budget office said.

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