

US Senate delays summer break amid health care impasse

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The US Senate will take the rare step of delaying its summer break by two weeks to focus on breaking an impasse over health care reform and other pending work, Republican leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday.

A day after getting a firm nudge from President Donald Trump to pass legislation that repeals and replaces the current law known as Obamacare, McConnell blamed what he called a "lack of cooperation" from Democrats as he announced the recess will start in mid-August, rather than at the end of July.

"Once the Senate completes its work on [health care](#) reform, we will turn to other important issues including the National Defense Authorization Act and the backlog of critical nominations that have been mindlessly stalled by Democrats," McConnell said.

"The Senate will delay the start of the August recess until the third week of August."

The White House backed McConnell's call for lawmakers to thrash out a health care deal before heading home.

"Millions of American families and individuals caught in the fallout of Obamacare's collapse... have been suffering the consequences of this failed law firsthand for far too long, and it's time for Senate Republicans to step up and fulfill the promise they made to those Americans by repealing and replacing it," White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee

Sanders told reporters.

The chamber will also use the expanded schedule to consider raising the nation's statutory borrowing limit, which must occur by mid-October if the government wants to avoid a risk of defaulting on its debt obligations.

"We have to do a debt-ceiling increase," McConnell said. "There are other things that we have to do and we only have a limited number of days left."

Several senators from within McConnell's party endorsed the strategy.

"Delaying the start of the August in-state work period is the right move. We've got important work that needs to continue," said Republican Senator Cory Gardner.

'Revised' bill Thursday

Democrats scoffed, insisting the issue was not timing but substance.

"Two weeks isn't going to solve their problem," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said.

"As long as this bill continues to cut taxes on the very wealthy and hurt working Americans, the bill is going to be as unpopular as it is today."

Trump campaigned relentlessly on a pledge to repeal and replace the 2010 Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, and as president it remains a top priority.

Last month he expressed confidence that the Senate effort—a revised version of the bill that passed the House of Representatives in

May—would be a "phenomenal" plan with "heart."

But McConnell, a seasoned tactician, was forced to postpone a June vote on the bill when he realized he did not have the votes for passage, amid a revolt by some conservative and moderate Republicans.

With Democrats united in opposition, McConnell needs support from at least 50 of the Senate's 52 Republicans to pass the measure. At least 10 Republicans have said they will not support the bill as written.

The Senate plan would keep parts of Obamacare intact, but strip away much of its funding. It also rolls back the expansion of Medicaid, the federal health care program for the poor and disabled.

Polls show the bill is widely unpopular among Americans. A study by the non-profit Congressional Budget Office forecast that under the [bill](#), ranks of the uninsured would swell by 22 million people by 2026 compared to current law.

McConnell said he would unveil "a revised version" of the measure by Thursday, with a new CBO score expected next week.

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