

US senators reach bipartisan deal on Obamacare

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US senators announced Tuesday they had reached a bipartisan deal to continue a program that helps low-income Americans purchase health insurance, days after President Donald Trump cut such subsidies.

Since taking office in January, Trump has sought to end the health reforms that took effect under former president Barack Obama allowing millions of uninsured people to get medical [insurance](#).

Repealing the Affordable Care Act—commonly known as Obamacare—was one of Trump's most strident campaign promises. He described Obamacare as a "total disaster" but his Republican Party has failed in efforts to repeal the reforms.

Trump has, however, cut some government budgetary support for Obamacare, and last week announced the administration would halt payments to insurers that are designed to help millions of lower-income Americans afford coverage.

He called those payments "a subsidy to the insurance companies" but said the White House would work with Congress for an interim solution before coming up with a longer-term plan.

On Tuesday he signaled he would support the bipartisan agreement as "a short-term deal."

Reached by Republican Lamar Alexander and Democrat Patty Murray,

it would fund for two years the federal reimbursements to [insurance companies](#) that are vital to sustain the Affordable Care Act.

The senators "have just announced they have an agreement," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told reporters.

Trump had backed legislation that would dismantle much of Obamacare in favor of a program that provides block grants to states to allow them greater flexibility in how to manage insurance coverage and costs.

Some Republicans balked at supporting the bill and it never received a vote.

Trump has stressed that he believes Congress will eventually pass some form of block grant legislation next year. In the meantime, Tuesday's agreement will "get us over this intermediate hump," he said.

Alexander, who chairs the Senate Health Committee, said Republicans were rallying around the deal because they wanted to avoid "chaos" in the insurance markets.

"The president likes this idea. So there is an emerging, encouraging consensus, and we'll see how far it goes," he told reporters.

Democrats had blasted the order Trump made last week as a cruel and intentional "sabotage" of Obamacare. But the opposition party's top senator expressed support for the agreement reached Tuesday.

"We've achieved stability if this [agreement](#) becomes law," said Senator Chuck Schumer, who described it as "a very good step forward."

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