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SAMLN17 CALL TO ACTION on Graham-Cassidy Proposal Health Care Proposed Legislation

1 message

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To: samln2017@sammt.org

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Greetings SAM Legislative Network Members,

We hope your school year is off to a great start!

A timely federal issue regarding America's Health Care has surfaced, and the SAM Delegate Assembly Steering Committee Members along with the SAM Affiliate Federal Relations Coordinators have agreed that a "Call to Action" of the SAM Legislative Network be enacted!

The timely issue is the Graham-Cassidy proposal to repeal the Affordable Care Act by September 30, 2017 (the final date for the ACA repeal to be considered). Details of the Graham-Cassidy proposal from the perspective of the staff of Senator Jon Tester is outlined below. Also included below, for your information, is a Billings Gazette article that weighs the issues.

CALL TO ACTION

Call our congressional delegation ASAP after reviewing the info below and state your opinion (suggest you request their NO vote based on our research) on the Graham-Cassidy amendment proposal. Tester: [202-224-2644](tel:202-224-2644); Daines: [202-224-2651](tel:202-224-2651); Gianforte: [202-225-3211](tel:202-225-3211). Please send a quick email to samkm@sammt.org if you accomplish this – thanks.

Details of the Graham-Cassidy Amendment as outlined by Senator Tester

We are asking for your help again.

I'm sure many of you are following the latest effort in Congress to repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with what Capitol Hill is calling the "Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson proposal." Jon believes this dangerous proposal, like its predecessors, is very bad for Montana. Today [Governor Bullock joined nine other governors](#) (four Republicans, four Democrats and one Independent) in urging the Senate "not to consider the Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson amendment and renew support for bipartisan efforts to make health care more available and affordable for all Americans."

What's wrong with this proposal? Gosh, where to start. The Graham-Cassidy proposal:

- Creates a new block grant to replace Medicaid expansion and the ACA's premium tax credits with drastically less money for states to use for health care
- Allows states to roll back the ACA's protections for pre-existing conditions, coverage of essential health benefits, and requirements that insurers spend money on actual health care (not administrative costs)
- Repeals the ACA's tax credits, which help cover insurance premiums
- Repeals the ACA's cost-sharing reductions (CSRs), which help cover copays, deductibles, and other out-of-pocket insurance costs
- Ends federal funding for Medicaid expansion in Montana

- Caps and cuts federal funding for traditional Medicaid, which threatens rural hospitals, nursing homes and care for disabled children
- Allows states to block-grant Medicaid or impose work requirements (this is a slippery slope that will eventually lead to drastic cuts to services)
- Defunds Planned Parenthood for one year
- Eliminates the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which pays for preventive care and disease prevention

The Senate may vote on this proposal as early as next week—before the Congressional Budget Office (Congress' independent scorekeeper) has a chance to determine how many Americans would lose insurance or pay more for health care under this proposal.

Jon has always said Congress needs to work together to lower costs and make health care more affordable, and that work starts with [his five proposals](#). Here is a statement from Jon:

“This dangerous bill will raise rates, kick hardworking folks off their health plans, and shutter rural hospitals. Washington politicians must start listening to Montanans and stop pushing their political agendas onto us. I will continue to fight for lower health care costs, better access, and a healthier Montana.” –Sen. Jon Tester

[More info on this topic - Billings Gazette article 9/20/17 \(copied below\)...](#)

<http://bit.ly/2yqXSba>

As health care battle reignites, Daines and Tester once again are on opposing sides
By Tom Lutey - Billings Gazette - September 20, 2017

Montana's Senate delegation is picking up where it left off on repealing the Affordable Care Act as lawmakers prepare for another vote, possibly next week.

Democratic Sen. Jon Tester called the GOP's latest attempt to appeal the ACA, a 2010 law commonly referred to as Obamacare, as a "dangerous bill that will raise rates, kick hardworking folks off their health plans and shutter rural hospitals."

Should the latest health care bill proposed by Republican Sens. Lindsey Graham and Bill Cassidy get a vote before the end of the month, Tester will oppose it. Among other things, the bill cuts federal funding for Medicaid, ends federal funding of Medicaid expansion and allows insurers to once again increase rates on Americans with pre-existing conditions, according to Montana's senior senator.

Republican Steve Daines said the GOP's latest attempt at a health care re-do could be good for Montana. The Graham-Cassidy bill would replace current flow of the federal money for Medicaid and other ACA subsidies with block grants. Those block grants will be smaller than current federal ACA support levels in some states, but Daines said it looks like Montana will receive more money. Dating back to his 2013 term in the U.S. House, Daines has been a consistent yes vote for repealing the ACA.

"You look at what's going on in Montana with the fiscal situation," Daines said. "The governor has a train wreck going on. Under the current Obamacare legislation, Medicaid is on a glide path, down from 100 percent to 90 percent. That shift, under current law, will even add more fuel."

Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock on Tuesday added his name to a bipartisan list of governors asking the Senate to kill the Graham-Cassidy bill and focus instead on making health care more available and affordable for Americans. The governors said they prefer a bipartisan attempt in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to stabilize market prices for individual insurance.

The HELP Committee ended its efforts Tuesday, when Chairman Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., declared a partisan impasse. The committee was debating whether to increase federal cost-sharing reduction payments to states, which insurers say they need to stay in individual markets.

Insurers have until Sept 27 to commit to state individual market programs for another year. If they don't commit, state's will lose insurers offering subsidized policies to people on the individual market.

Tester lately has been arguing against plans by both the left and right to ditch the Affordable Care Act. On Sept 13, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., unveiled his "Medicare for All" plan. The politically independent senator, who ran unsuccessfully as a

Democrat in the 2016 presidential primary elections, is proposing that Medicare be expanded by stepping down the eligibility age every year for four years until every American qualifies.

A couple dozen Democrats, including the possible presidential candidates like Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, signed onto the Sanders plan. Tester didn't sign on.

Tester told The Gazette the Senate's focus should be on improving the Affordable Care Act, not a Medicare expansion bill with no chance of becoming law. Since January, hospitals in Montana have been telling Tester repealing ACA would damage rural health care across the state.

"What they told me is 'Fix the current health care system,'" Tester said. "Keep what's in it that works and fix what's in it that doesn't. That's how I've approached all of this going forward."

The Montana Hospital Association strongly opposed Republicans' attempt in July to repeal ACA. Medicaid expansion is working, MHA argued, but the federal government wasn't doing enough to preserve services in rural Montana. Profit margins at hospitals had fallen 40 percent since Medicaid expanded, MHA said. The association said unadjusted reimbursement rates, combined with rising drug and supply costs, were eroding profits.

The American Hospital Association announced its opposition to the Graham-Cassidy bill for not stabilizing the insurance market. AHA said the block grant program would end in 2026, cutting support for millions of people.

Daines said the block grant program pencils out until 2026 because all federal budgeting is done on 10-year cycles.

[Senate health care, round 2: Tester still opposed, Daines undecided]<http://billingsgazette.com/news/government-and-politics/senate-health-care-round-tester-still-opposed-daines-undecided/article_89835665-c2ef-5fd1-9481-24d35d68a116.html>

More info on this topic - AFT Prepared MT Impact

Click [HERE](#) to see the MT Graham-Cassidy impact prepared on 9/20/17 by the AFT.

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