

# Health Reform Benched By Republican Leadership

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## Legislative Activity

### Health Reform Benched By Republican Leadership

Repealing and replacing the ***Affordable Care Act (ACA)*** has been the goal of Republicans in Congress for the last seven years. Health reform was front and center during the campaign and it was ***President Trump*** and ***Speaker Ryan***'s first priority out of the starting blocks in 2017. With control of the House of Representatives, Senate, and White House, Republicans believed they finally had the opportunity to swiftly repeal President Obama's signature piece of legislation and replace it with a Republican alternative. Speaker Ryan set out to repeal and replace the ACA by the April recess, resulting in a busy and chaotic March for members of the House. After marathon markups with countless amendments and never ending negotiations many believed Speaker Ryan would win the support of the Freedom Caucus and squeak out the 216 votes needed to forward the American Health Care Act (AHCA) to the Senate and stick to his tight timeline. After Speaker Ryan pulled the bill from consideration on the House floor on Friday, Republicans quickly realized health reform was being benched. Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR), Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, said the Committee will not rewrite the bill and will instead pivot to working on issues that affect the exchange market and the reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Republicans are stepping away from health care reform for now, but they have limited time to craft a new strategy. The inability to pass health reform through the budget reconciliation process means that any new reform legislation would have to move through the regular order process and would require 60 votes to pass the Senate. With Republicans being forced to fold on health reform last week, many questions remain. Will Republicans keep the ACA in place and watch it crumble? Will they repair and rebrand the law? Will Secretary Price and Administrator Verma undo ACA regulations to provide more freedoms? Will they win the support of the Freedom Caucus or reach across the aisle and work with Democrats? Can Republicans step up to the plate and hit a home run when health reform gets its next turn at bat, or will health reform be warming the bench for the rest of the season?

### This Week's Hearings:

- Tuesday, March 28: The House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing titled "Examining FDA's Medical Device User Fee Program."

- Tuesday, March 28: The House Committee on Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition will hold a hearing titled “The Next Farm Bill: The Future of SNAP Policy.”
- Wednesday, March 29: The House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Health will hold a markup of a number of bills including: H.R. 467, the VA Scheduling Accountability Act; H.R. 907, the Newborn Care Improvement Act; H.R. 918, the Veterans Urgent Access to Mental Health Care Act; H.R. 1162, the No Hero Left Untreated Act; H.R. 1545, Clarifying the VA’s authority to disclose certain patient information to state-controlled substance monitoring programs; and a legislative draft of the Medical Scribe Pilot Act of 2017.
- Wednesday, March 29: The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform will hold a hearing titled “Federally Funded Cancer Research: Coordination and Innovation.”
- Wednesday, March 29: The House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Services will hold a hearing titled “Budget Hearing—Department of Health and Human Services.”
- Wednesday, March 29: The Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense will hold a hearing titled “Review of the Defense Health Program and Military Medicine Funding.”
- Wednesday, March 29: The Senate Special Committee on Aging will hold a hearing titled “The Arc of Alzheimer’s: From Preventing Cognitive Decline in Americans to Assuring Quality Care for those Living with the Disease.”
- Wednesday, March 29: The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs will hold a hearing titled “Native Youth: Promoting Diabetes Prevention Through Healthy Living.”