

# Delay on health care plan

## Trump holds off on bid to replace Obamacare

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WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is postponing his push to replace the Affordable Care Act with a Republican-led plan until “right after” the 2020 election, announcing the delay a week after, with no firm backup plan in hand, he revived his fight to repeal the Obama-era program.

Trump, in a series of late Monday night tweets, said Republicans would wait to introduce a replacement plan until after next year’s election, when Trump predicted: “Republicans hold the Senate & win back the House.”

“The Republicans are developing a really great HealthCare Plan with far lower premiums (cost) & deductibles than Obamacare,” Trump tweeted, using the nickname for the ACA. “In other words it will be far less expensive & much more usable than Obamacare. Vote will be taken right after the Election when Republicans hold the Senate & win back the House.”

Trump’s assertions that Republicans were working on a plan came a week after the Justice Department sided with a lower court decision that deemed the entire Affordable Care Act unconstitutional. The decision, on hold pending the outcome of an appeal, spurred questions about whether Trump had any proposals lined up to replace the plan, should it be invalidated.

White House aides indicated to reporters last week that there were no concrete replacement plans drafted, and Republican congressional leaders, reeling from losses in the midterm election, noted the slim chances of passing a new national health care plan with Democrats in control of the House.

Trump, speaking to reporters at the White House on Tuesday, acknowledged the challenge of passing a new health plan through a divided Congress, saying he was holding off on his push because “we don’t



Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer outside the Supreme Court Tuesday.



@realDonaldTrump

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have the House.” The president’s earlier push to repeal ACA narrowly failed to pass the Senate in 2017, when Repub-

licans were in control of both chambers.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, at a Tuesday

news conference, said he spoke with Trump on Monday and encouraged him to back off on his push to draft a new GOP health care bill. McConnell said he advised the president that Senate Republicans were not looking to take on the issue during the 2020 campaign season.

“I made it clear to him we were not going to be doing that in the Senate,” McConnell said.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), speaking Tuesday at a rally on the steps of the Supreme Court, said Trump was holding “Americans hostage through the 2020 election when it comes to health care.”

“Last night the president tweeted that they will come up with their plan in 2021. Translation: they have no health care plan. It’s the same old song they’ve been singing. They’re for repeal. They have no replacement,” Schumer said at the rally, organized by congressional Democrats to protest the Justice Department’s support for a repeal.

Last week, as Trump declared Republicans would be known as “the party of health-care,” several GOP lawmakers said they were surprised that

the president was once again revving up his fight to repeal and replace the act.

“I was a little surprised he came out of the chute in health care,” Sen. John Kennedy (R-La.) told reporters after Trump attended a luncheon with Senate Republicans last Tuesday.

Senate Finance Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) told The Washington Post last week that the two Senate committees overseeing health care policy had no plans to draft a replacement, even as Trump announced that three Republican senators — Sens. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Rick Scott (R-Fla.) — were working on a replacement proposal.

Scott, speaking to reporters during a news conference Tuesday, when asked about Trump’s tweets, said he was focused on legislation to lower prescription drug prices.

“I think you’d have to ask the president,” Scott said. “I know what I’m going to focus on. I’m going to focus on drug prices.”

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), who joined Democrats in voting against the repeal in 2017, sent a letter to Attorney General William Barr on Monday, urging him to reconsider the Justice Department’s support for repealing the act.

“Rather than seeking to have the courts invalidate the ACA, the proper route for the administration to pursue would be to propose changes to the ACA or to once again seek its repeal. The administration should not attempt to use the courts to bypass Congress,” Collins wrote.

White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney acknowledged that the process to come up with a replacement plan would be slow moving, when pressed for details during a series of Sunday talk show interviews.

“What we’re going to do over the course of the next couple of months, because the lawsuit will move fairly slowly, is to come up with something that can pass into law,” Mulvaney said on CNN’s “State of the Union.”

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