

Federal Healthcare Legislation Update – August 2017

By Jean Chariton, DCAH Legislative Chair

The week in review - the vote came on Tuesday, July 25th, as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and President Donald Trump dared their fellow Republicans to block their seven-year campaign promise to repeal and replace Obamacare. It died on a 43 to 57 vote.

This measure that combined a previous Senate proposal known as the Better Care Reconciliation Act BCRA - \$100 billion in extra money for people on Medicaid a proposal from conservative Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, to allow bare-bones health insurance plans. This was desired by Moderate Republicans.

Democrats moved successfully to kill the amendment. The vote came after a Senate clerk was forced to read the text of the amendment aloud in the Senate chamber, all part of the delaying tactics Democrats employing to express their overall unhappiness with the bill.

The next day, July 26th, Senators cast a vote on a "repeal-only" proposal. This was defeated as well, because many Republicans as well as all Democrats reject repealing without a replacement ready. Republican senators voted against the plan along with all Democrats. In total, 45 senators voted in favor and 55 against.

Democrats are united against the bill, saying it would end health care coverage for millions of Americans.

Republicans just dodged political disaster on health care

"Anyone who thinks this is over is sadly mistaken," said Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-New York. "There are many, many Republicans who don't like this bill, who don't want to vote for it. They are under enormous pressure to vote for it."

On July 27th the our Chapter sent out a Operation Shout – Take Action to our members. I hope everyone contact our Congress Rep., Sen. Dianne Feinstein or Sen. Kamala Harris. You can help us spread the message by doing one or all of the following:

- Tell your employer clients to take Action
- Share Your Story: Congress Considering Proposals to Eliminate or Cap the Employer Exclusion
- Tell Congress to Permanently Repeal the Cadillac/Excise Tax

That same day, Chamber was holding a series of votes in a "vote-a-rama" to test what senators will support in an Obamacare replacement bill. With the unlikely failure of this plan, and unless there is a major breakthrough to revive repeal and replace version of the BCRA, Republicans will effectively be out of options for using the reconciliation package to repeal the ACA this year. This means that instead of making changes to the law that would only require 51 votes for passage, any legislation would require the support of 60 senators.

The motion to proceed was passed to start the debate and in the coming days the DCAHU will send all members an email once any full bill is passed. However, when a bill passes the Senate it is not final, and has to pass in the House, and then onto the president's desk. We have long journey ahead, but we will keep our members informed.