

Obamacare repeal fails

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After President Donald Trump demanded Republican members of the U.S. House pass a controversial bill that would repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), on a threat that otherwise, “Obamacare” would be here to stay, that repeal bill was suddenly pulled moments before it was to come to a vote.

“I am grateful that public opinion about the proposed bill has prevailed,” said West Plains community activist Lois Reborne, who has devoted her time and energy to promoting affordable health care for all Missourians. “This bill, bad to begin with, had only gotten worse in the last 24 hours, and the people have spoken.” Reborne says it is time to change priorities.

“I hope that we can move on now to fix the issues with the ACA,” she said. “I look forward to standing in support of legislative efforts like rebuilding the country’s infrastructure that will bring good jobs our way.”

“It’s not often an officeholder can both threaten to do real harm to their constituents, and fail to fulfill their central campaign promise, in a single day,” said Missouri Democratic Party Chair Stephen Webber in response to the news. “But Missouri’s Republicans somehow managed it.”

His office noted that state Republicans in the General Assembly have continued to support opposition to the Affordable Care Act for seven years. It was first passed in 2010.

Meanwhile, Missouri House Representative Shawn Rhoads, Republican for the 154th District that covers most of Howell County, was not sure how to take the news.

“I’m just finding out about it,” he told the Quill Friday afternoon after the news broke that House Speaker Paul Ryan pulled the bill at President Trump’s request. “I really didn’t keep close track.” Rhoads said he had not heard anything about the bill in the last few days.

“Missourians won a tremendous victory today when the U.S. House halted its effort to gut the Affordable Care Act and slash funding for Medicaid,” said Jen Bersdale of St. Louis. She is the executive director for Missouri Health Care for All, a grassroots organization that works statewide to promote affordable health care.

“We know thousands of Missourians, including many in Howell County, joined millions of people across the country in speaking out against this bill, which would have led to 24 million Americans losing their



Vigil

HOLDING A VIGIL for affordable health care, these constituents were among dozens stationed on March 20 outside Rep. Jason Smith’s (R-8th District) West Plains office on Court Square. The group’s goal is to make known its concerns about the future of health care for Missourians.

health insurance,” Bersdale added. “We urge our elected officials to turn their attention now to building on the health care gains we have made by further improving access for all Missourians.”

Republican U.S. House District 8 Rep. Jason Smith’s and Democrat Senator Claire McCaskill’s offices were unavailable for comment.

‘A STUNNING DEFEAT’

The Associated Press (AP) reports it was a stunning defeat for the new president after his demand the legislation be voted on Friday, and subsequent threat to leave ‘Obamacare’ in place.

“The president’s gamble failed,” reported AP. “Instead Trump, who campaigned as a master deal-maker and claimed that he alone could fix the nation’s health care system, saw his ultimatum rejected by Republican lawmakers who made clear they answer to their own voters, not to the president.

“Republicans have spent seven years campaigning against former President Barack Obama’s health care law, and cast dozens of votes to repeal it in full or in part. But when they finally got the chance to pass a repeal bill that actually had a chance to get signed, they couldn’t pull it off.”

AP suggests the road ahead is uncertain and tasks such as overhauling the tax code, prioritized by the president, are not going to be easy.

“Trump is certain to be weakened politically, a big early congressional defeat adding to the continuing inquiries into his presidential campaign’s Russia connections and his unfounded wiretapping allegations against Obama,” wrote AP.

This all one day after the bill, already delayed from a vote on Thursday, did not pick up more support after President Trump insisted it pass, or else. In fact, it seemed to lose support as Friday wore on.

Three key Republican players, Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, Rep. Barbara Comstock of Virginia and Rep. David Joyce of Ohio announced “no” votes.

“The defections raised the possibility that the bill would not only lose on the floor, but lose big,” AP wrote. “In the face of that evidence, and despite insistences from White House officials and Ryan that Friday was the day to vote, leadership pulled back from the brink.”