



Picketers rally for Obamacare



‘THEY BROKE IT, they own it now,’ reads a sign held by 89-year-old Missouri Health Care for All activist Pam Wright of West Plains during a rally in support of affordable health care on Tuesday in front of Ozarks Medical Center. Wright said she was there out of concern for the expense that would be put onto Americans in need of health care if the Affordable Health Care Act is repealed.

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About a dozen sign-holding locals stood Tuesday in front of Ozarks Medical Center in West Plains along the U.S. 63 bypass calling for support for affordable health care (Obamacare) to honking passersby.

Some who had appointments scheduled at OMC that morning canceled out of concerns for safety, hospital representatives told the Quill.

The rally, which began at 11 a.m., was held locally along with a series of other events planned by grassroots organization Missouri Health Care for All in Springfield, Joplin, St. Louis, Arnold, Clayton and Dexter.

The events were called in response to the U.S. Senate’s Jan. 12 vote to pass a budget resolution that would make possible a future repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), popularly known as



marketing, planning and public relations for the hospital, of the picketers. She said the hospital had networked with Missouri Health Care for All to get the word out about the Health Care Exchange when it rolled out, and she knew many of the activists from that time.

From the hospital's standpoint, the idea of affordable health care makes sense because many patients are on Medicare and Medicaid, Stover said, adding that she would "leave to better brains than mine to figure out how." The uncertainty around the status of ACA means that the future impact on hospitals is unknown.

"These little communities, we're just trying to take care of each other," said Stover.

Currently, hospital President and CEO Tom Keller is at a conference in Naples, Fla. with board members, discussing issues that arise with hospital governance.

ACA'S IMPACT

Pam Wright, an 89-year-old activist from West Plains, stood apart from the crowd with a sign that read, "They broke it. They own it now." The Quill asked why she was there.

"Mainly because I'm afraid of what they might do to Medicare," she answered.

"I'd have to run around and try to find insurance," she said of the impact if efforts to privatize the program succeed. "It'll be more expensive. It'll put more expense on the people who are trying to find health care." Wright also spoke of concerns about the number of people without insurance coverage.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on Jan. 5 reported that between 2010 and 2014, the number of Americans with pre-existing health conditions who went without insurance all year dropped by 22 percent, or 3.6 million people. And while data for those with pre-existing conditions only goes through 2014, the uninsured rate for all Americans had fallen by an additional 22 "This is clear and measurable progress, and we shouldn't turn the clock back to a time when people were denied coverage," said HHS Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell

That same sentiment was echoed by the Missouri Health Care for All activists standing outside of OMC on Tuesday.

"There's a lot of talk about repeal or amends," said Tom Rowley, Texas County-based creator of the comedy music video "Healthcare Blues" published on YouTube last spring.

"I want to see healthcare be great, I want to improve it. I don't see how bumping 30 million people is going to make it better," he said. In March 2016, HHS reported that 20 million Americans had secured health insurance coverage since the passage of the law in 2010.

Fellow activist Barry DeBrown, holding a sign lamenting the "greatness" of an America without health care for all toward the busy bypass, said that it is time to hold elected politicians accountable, naming in particular U.S. Representative Jason Smith (R-District 8), who voted in favor of the Jan. 12 budget resolution, and state Senator Mike Cunningham (R-Rogersville), who voted against Medicare expansion that would enable a percentage of uninsured Missourians to gain insurance.



Obama’s – health care plan,” Sen. Blunt told the Quill by phone. “I think it has not done what people had hoped it to.” He added that he is hopeful that a replacement for Affordable Care Act can be put in place in a way that doesn’t leave people uninsured until something better is in place, something that offers the freedom of choice.

“We will never reach the status of ‘America, great again’ until we have health care for all,” asserted West Plains resident Dan Leary, also with Missouri Health Care for All. He said he found current President Obama’s words admirable – that if anyone could come up with a better healthcare solution, he would support it.

Leary said he believes the same way.

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