

SENATE'S

The Senate health-care plan closely resembles an earlier bill passed by the House, with both dismantling key provisions of ObamaCare.

Individual and employer mandates

The Senate proposal, like that passed by the House, would eliminate ObamaCare's mandate that most people buy insurance or pay a penalty. The requirement for large and midsize companies to provide coverage would also be out.

Preexisting conditions

The Senate plan would keep ObamaCare's requirement that insurers accept everyone. Under the House bill, states could allow insurers to charge sick people higher premiums if the state has another way to help pay for them, such as a high-risk pool for the seriously ill.

Essential health benefits

The Senate plan would let states redefine what ObamaCare called "essential health benefits," which include emergency services, prescription drugs and pregnancy care, among others. The House bill would do the same.

Taxes

The Senate draft would eventually repeal most of ObamaCare's provisions to pay for expanded coverage, including taxes on annual wages of more than \$200,000, investment income, medical devices and prescription drugs. The House bill calls for similar cuts.

Reveals its version of

By MARISSA SCHULTZ
and BOB FREDERICKS

The Senate unveiled its plan to repeal and replace ObamaCare on Thursday, a proposal that would cut Medicaid, eliminate penalties for people who don't buy insurance and that would kill tax hikes.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said the Senate had to act because ex-President Barack Obama's signature legislative achievement was on life support. "Because ObamaCare isn't working by nearly any measure, it is failed," he said on the Senate floor. "Policies contained in the discussion draft will repeal the mandate so Americans are no longer forced to buy insurance they don't need or can't afford." McConnell crafted the bill be-

hind closed doors, angering Democrats and leaving even some Republicans skeptical.

"A lot of questions," said Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC), explaining that most of his caucus had not even seen the bill. "There wasn't paper. Until they get a chance to read it, I'm sure they won't firm up."

The proposal, which closely resembles legislation passed last month by the House, would:

- Phase out extra funding to 31 states that expanded Medicaid, and in 2021 begin putting the entire Medicaid program on a fixed budget, ending ObamaCare's unlimited entitlement — a provision that would drastically cut funding for high-spending Medicaid states like New York.

- Allow states to redefine what constitutes mandated essential health benefits — which now in-

clude emergency services, maternity care and prescription drugs, among others — potentially cutting benefits.

- Require insurance companies to cover preexisting conditions, unlike the House bill, which would allow insurers to charge sick people higher premiums.

- Cut taxes on people making more than \$200,000 a year, on investment income and on medical devices.

- Retain a requirement that young people can remain on their parents' policies until age 26.

- Provide billions to states and insurance companies to buttress markets that have been abandoned by insurers.

Michael D'Addio, a principal at accounting giant Marcum LLP who focuses on health care and



'NOBAMACARE'

Abortion

Planned Parenthood is eligible for Medicaid reimbursements under ObamaCare, although federal funds cannot be used directly for abortions. Under the Senate and House measures, Medicaid funding for Planned Parenthood would be cut off for one year.

Insurance tax credits

Under ObamaCare, tax credits are based on income, age and geography, which benefits lower- and moderate-income people. Under the Senate plan, tax credits would be based on age, income and geography, but they would cover a less comprehensive plan. The House bill bases the credits only on age.

Cost-sharing subsidies

The Senate proposal would also extend ObamaCare's cost-sharing subsidies for two years, helping insurers pay medical bills for low-income customers.

The elderly

Insurers would be allowed to charge older customers five times more than younger ones under the Senate outline — same as the House bill. Under ObamaCare, they could be charged three times as much.



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell leaves the chamber after announcing the release of the GOP's health-care plan.

Medicaid

The Senate plan would phase out funds for Medicaid expansion over three years and, starting in 2021, put the entire program on a fixed, reduced budget and end ObamaCare's unlimited entitlement — a provision that would mean drastic cuts for high-spending Medicaid states like New York. The House bill also would cap Medicaid. The Senate's proposal would

keeps a House provision that lets every county in New York state — except the five of New York City — avoid paying into the state's Medicaid program, forcing the city to pay more

Dependent children

The Senate proposal would allow young adults to stay on their parents insurance until age 26, same as ObamaCare and the House bill.

'repeal and replace' health package

taxes, said he found many similarities between the House and Senate legislation.

"The biggest difference is the Senate bill doesn't give states the right to opt out of [protections] for people with preexisting conditions," D'Addio said. "I think the concern in the House bill that people with preexisting conditions might end up being charged enormous amounts for premiums is less in the Senate bill because that ability to opt out isn't there."

Like the House bill, the Senate's draft would repeal the individual mandate — a penalty for those who fail to buy health insurance.

Policy experts said that would keep more young, healthy people out of the market, saving them money but potentially creating a sicker patient pool.

The Senate plan also keeps a

House provision championed by Rep. Chris Collins (R-NY) that allows every county in New York state, except the five in the Big Apple, to avoid paying into the state's Medicaid program, forcing the city to cough up more.

McConnell purposely described the plan as a "discussion draft" to mollify critics, including conservatives who complained that it doesn't go far enough to fully repeal ObamaCare.

He and other senators said they expected extensive haggling and many changes before a bill is brought to a vote, which could happen as early as next week.

Democrats said the GOP did not allow enough time for proper debate. "I don't think it gives enough time to thoroughly analyze the bill, but we'll see when it comes out," said Minority Leader

Charles Schumer (D-NY), who harshly criticized the GOP effort. "We live in the wealthiest country on earth. Surely, we can do better than what the Republican health-care bill promises," he said.

Medical professionals, meanwhile, also criticized the plan, which Republicans said would cut costs and not force Americans to buy insurance that they don't want or need.

The American Academy of Pediatrics said the proposal would hurt children by scaling back Medicaid.

The group's president, Dr. Fernando Stein, said the plan was crafted without input from pediatricians and "would tear down" the progress the nation has made by achieving insurance coverage for 95 percent of children.

President Trump campaigned on a promise to repeal ObamaCare, the 2010 law that extended insurance coverage to millions of Americans through subsidized private insurance and an expansion of Medicaid.

Trump had urged the GOP-led Senate to pass a more "generous" bill than the one narrowly approved by the House, whose version he privately called "mean."

On Thursday, he praised the Senate proposal at an unrelated White House "Emerging Technology" event.

"It's going to very good," Trump said. "A little negotiation, but it's going to be very good."

He also slammed Democrats opposed to the plan as "obstructionists."

About 23 million people would wind up without coverage under

the House measure, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, including those who would voluntarily opt out after the individual mandate is repealed.

Given the opposition of all Senate Democrats, GOP leaders will need the support of at least 50 of the chamber's 52 Republicans to ensure passage.

With four conservatives already expressing skepticism, the measure's fate is uncertain.

The atmosphere in the Capitol was charged after the vote, with lawmakers speculating what would happen next and protesters clogging the hallways of the Senate.

Capitol Police arrested dozens, many yelling, "No cuts to Medicaid," as they were led, carried or wheeled away. *With Wires*