

Simpson, amid disarray: ‘I don’t see us coming back to the health care issue’

WASHINGTON — With Republicans in fits over a proposed repeal of Obamacare, Idaho Republican Rep. Mike Simpson offered his take on Friday, saying that “legislating is never a pretty process.”

“It is not an easy job to get something passed,” Simpson said in an interview. “And I’ve had people say, ‘you guys look like idiots,’ and you know, ‘it’s like a circus,’ and all that kinds of stuff. Watching the sausage being made, you’d never eat the sausage.”

Simpson, who had officially been undecided, announced his backing of the repeal bill shortly before Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin pulled the plug on a vote.

“If you vote no on this bill, what you’re voting for is to maintain Obama-care,” Simpson said.

As it became obvious that the repeal effort had ended, Simpson called it “incredible” that the GOP was allowing Obamacare to remain intact.

“I don’t see us coming back to the health care issue, at least this year, maybe not even this year,” he said.

At a news conference at the Capitol, Ryan said he decided to delay the vote when it was apparent that it lacked the support to pass.

“I will not sugarcoat this — this is a disappointing day for us. Doing big things is hard,” Ryan said.

Simpson said one of the reasons that he decided to back the bill was because he didn’t want to see Ryan fail in such a high-profile vote.

“Obviously, I want Republican speakers to succeed,” Simpson said.

Idaho’s other House member, Rep. Raul Labrador, could not be reached for comment. His spokesman said he was involved in negotiations over the bill.

But Labrador, a member of the House Freedom Caucus, opposed the bill, saying it did not go far enough in cutting costs.

President Donald Trump invited Labrador and other members of the caucus to the White House on Thursday, seeking to win more votes.

Trump took to Twitter to criticize the caucus on Friday, when it became obvious that many of them still planned to vote against the repeal.

Trump tweeted that it was ironic that many members of the Freedom Caucus opposed the repeal because doing so meant that Congress would continue to provide funding to Planned Parenthood.

— *by Rob Hotakainen for McClatchy Washington Bureau*

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