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**The Idaho Statesman**  
Boise, Idaho  
**Friday June 23, 2017**  
**Wire Report**  
Page 1 of 2

## Revised health bill facing GOP resistance already

WASHINGTON — The Senate health care bill to replace the Affordable Care Act would likely cause millions of Americans to lose their Medicaid and private insurance marketplace coverage. It also could make coverage more expensive for many sicker, older and low-income individuals.

The closely guarded draft of the Senate legislation was released Thursday morning, revealing some significant revisions to the widely panned American Health Care Act that narrowly passed the House of Representatives in May – but staying in line with the Republican push to cut taxes and phase out Medicaid expansion.

Negotiated in secret by a hand-picked group of 13 male senators with little input from patient advocacy groups, hospitals and care providers, the legislation hews closely to the AHCA by cutting subsidies that help purchase marketplace insurance, phasing out the Medicaid expansion and proposing even deeper cuts to Medicaid than the reduction sought in the House legislation.

The legislation, named the Better Care Reconciliation Act, also would abolish most of the taxes that funded the Affordable Care Act's coverage expansion.

The hits to lower-income, sick and older Americans, coupled with the secrecy, haste and lack of debate that surrounded the Senate bill's creation, will make it hard for moderate Republicans to vote for the measure in a possible floor vote next Thursday. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell can afford to lose just two Republican votes, and quite a few already are skeptics.

Four GOP conservatives – Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky, Ted Cruz of Texas, Ron Johnson of Wisconsin and Mike Lee of Utah – issued a joint statement saying the legislation doesn't go far enough and that they wouldn't vote for the bill now – but that they are open to negotiation.

“There are provisions in this draft that represent an improvement to our current health care system, but it does not appear this draft as written will accomplish the most important promise that we made to Americans: to repeal Obamacare and lower their health care costs,” the men said in their joint statement.

Even if the legislation does pass the Senate, it will face tough sledding in the House, where a more conservative version barely passed in May.

A Congressional Budget Office analysis of the Senate bill's cost and impact is expected soon. The AHCA would leave 23 million people without health coverage and slash Medicaid's budget by \$834 billion over 10 years, the CBO found.

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A disappointing CBO score for the Senate bill would only compound the pressure facing wary Republicans such as Rand Paul of Kentucky, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Rob Portman of Ohio, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

Collins' spokeswoman, Annie Clark, immediately issued a statement Thursday saying the senator has quite a few concerns and will review the bill this weekend. Collins "will be particularly interested in examining the forthcoming CBO analysis on the impact on insurance coverage, the effect on insurance premiums, and the changes in the Medicaid program," Clark wrote.

Republican Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada, who's up for re-election in 2018, will also face some soul-searching over his vote.

*by Tony Pugh and William Douglas for McClatchy Washington Bureau*

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