

Senate should reject ACA repeal, replace bills

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Ahead of a planned vote in the Senate on Tuesday, AMA Executive Vice President and CEO James L. Madara, MD, made it clear that neither of the bills senators may consider contain the necessary elements to earn the support of America's physicians.

"We urge the Senate to reject efforts to repeal or replace the Affordable Care Act," Dr. Madara wrote in a letter to Senate leaders, asking that they "work instead toward improvements that will increase access to affordable, quality health care coverage for all Americans." He noted further that "recent revisions do not correct core elements that will lead to millions of Americans losing health insurance coverage with a resulting decline in both health status and outcomes."

One bill that may be considered, a so-called clean repeal that was vetoed by President Obama in 2015, is the Obamacare Repeal Reconciliation Act of 2017. That bill, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated, would result in 32 million more uninsured Americans by 2026, compared with current law. The CBO projects that another bill, the Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 (BCRA), would leave 22 million more without insurance in the next decade. In addition to the reducing insurance coverage rates, the legislation would weaken individual markets, make coverage less affordable and sharply cut funding for state Medicaid programs.

"While efforts have been made to improve the bill [BCRA] through provisions such as supplemental funding to address opioid abuse and market stability funding, these investments are made necessary because of the reduced health insurance coverage and weakened markets brought about by the underlying legislation," Dr. Madara wrote.

The Association opposed previous versions of BCRA, based largely on the projected impact on the number of Americans who will become uninsured and reduced federal support for Medicaid. Direct written and personal communications with members of Congress represent one component of a broad-based advocacy campaign that the AMA has been pursuing throughout 2017.

Physicians and patients who want to engage in the advocacy campaign to preserve access to affordable and meaningful health insurance coverage are encouraged to visit the AMA's campaign website, at Patientsbeforepolitics.org. The site explores the AMA's health reform objectives in depth and provides resource documents, patient profiles and grassroots action links to facilitate communications with their Senators.

Read more about the AMA's comprehensive vision for health-system reform, refined over more than two decades by the AMA House of Delegates, which is composed of representatives of more than 190 state and national specialty medical associations. Or explore the *AMA Wire*® special series, “Envisioning Health Reform.”

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