

POLITICO

Health vote: Will pro-repeal Dems flip?

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July 12, 2012

This week's House vote on repeal of President Barack Obama's health care reform law could have all the suspense of a summer re-run — unless additional Democrats defect to support repeal.

The floor debate is likely to mirror the partisan rancor that has been replayed more than two dozen times over the past 18 months as the House has taken up repeal or defunding of the health law, only to see the measures die in the Senate, as this one is destined to do.

Only three Democrats supported full repeal in January 2011: Reps. Dan Boren, Mike McIntyre and Mike Ross. Since then, several other Democrats have supported partial repeal or have made other moves to align themselves with conservatives as they enter difficult reelection battles.

So far, only one Democrat, Rep. Larry Kissell of North Carolina, has said he will join the pro-repeal ranks when the House votes this week.

"I've heard from hundreds and hundreds of people from my district about their opposition to the health care law," Kissell [told the Charlotte Observer](#) last week, explaining his stance. "I voted against it originally and I will vote to repeal it."

Kissell opposed full repeal in January 2011 but has voted to repeal pieces of the law since then, including the 1099 tax reporting requirements and the Independent Payment Advisory Board, which is going to be responsible for controlling Medicare spending growth.

For Democrats considering supporting repeal, the vote poses a quandary. They could garner support from conservatives for supporting repeal of an unpopular law, but risk looking like a "flip-flopper."

House Democratic leaders are whipping the vote to see if there will be additional defections — and there are several votes to watch, including nine other Democrats who voted against the law when it passed in 2010. Those were Reps. Collin Peterson of Minnesota, Jason Altmire and Tim Holden of Pennsylvania, Dan Lipinski of Illinois, Heath Shuler of North Carolina, Jim Matheson of Utah, John Barrow of Georgia, Ben Chandler of Kentucky and Stephen Lynch of Massachusetts.

Most of them have voted to repeal or defund at least one piece of the law. Some have sided with Republicans during other high-profile votes, such as holding Attorney General Eric Holder in contempt of Congress. Some are also facing tough reelection fights.

For instance, Peterson and Matheson are running in districts that are more Republican in 2012. Both opposed full repeal but have supported repeal of various pieces of the law.

Matheson's office declined to comment on whether he has decided on how he would vote and Peterson's office did not respond to a request for comment.

Lipinski is another Democrat who opposed the law and opposed full repeal. But he has voted with Republicans to repeal select pieces of the law, such as the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports, or CLASS, provision, and his statements have become increasingly harsh.

"More than two years have passed since I voted against the health care law because it is unaffordable, cuts Medicare, does not do enough to lower the soaring cost of health care, and would allow federal funding for abortion," Lipinski said after the Supreme Court ruled on the law last month. "The details about the law that have emerged in the meantime have only added to my concerns."

Rep. Kathy Hochul of New York wasn't yet in the House during the first full repeal vote but she has voted to repeal pieces of the legislation. Her office did not return a request for comment Monday but she has said in the past that she wants to improve the Affordable Care Act.

Wednesday's vote was planned to signal Republicans' determination to get rid of the law legislatively after the Supreme Court did not strike it as unconstitutional.

"In light of the Supreme Court's decision last week, I think it is important to once again send the message, underline the point that until you get rid of this underlying law, it's very difficult to move forward," said Rep. Michael Burgess (R-Texas), one of the most vocal House Republicans on health care.

While the vote tally could change slightly, most positions on the health law haven't changed much since well before the law passed in March 2010.

"People are talking from talking points — that's why the Sunday morning talk shows are getting so boring," said **John C. Goodman**, president of the **National Center for Policy Analysis** and author of "Priceless: Curing the Healthcare Crisis." "You certainly aren't seeing [new opinions] on TV or the floor of either chamber."

Republicans say that voting for repeal now isn't going to "undo" previous support for the law.

"Nearly every House Democrat is on record supporting Obamacare's massive tax increases and rising costs on job creators. Each one of them will be held accountable for those votes regardless

of their pathetic attempts to distance themselves from an unpopular law signed by an unpopular president,” said Paul Lindsay, spokesman for the National Republican Campaign Committee.

For their part, Democrats are hoping for some Republican flips in their direction — although the Republicans have been quite united in opposing the president’s health law.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has released ads reminding voters of the law’s benefits, such as free preventive health screenings and coverage for children up to age 26. The ads are running in the districts of Reps. Dan Lungren and Mary Bono Mack of California, Bob Dold, Judy Biggert and Bobby Schilling of Illinois and Nan Hayworth and Chris Gibson of New York.

“Your member of Congress may vote to repeal important health care benefits for everyday Americans,” the ads say. “But she protected ‘generous’ health plans for Congress at taxpayer expense.”