

Is Healthcare on Life Support?

Congress has an abysmal approval rating of about 20%. There are dozens of reasons for this rating. Right now, my disapproval with Congress stems from the chaos in Washington over healthcare.

Obamacare is imploding. It's up to the Republicans to repeal and replace it. I know the Democrats will say NO to anything the Republicans propose. I get it. Not one Republican voted for Obamacare and, as a result, the Democrats own that disaster. So, the Democrats are playing the same game. (Games. Played by both sides. Another reason to dislike Congress.)

My beef now is with the Republicans. Granted. I don't know all the procedures, rules and machinations that make up the comings and goings of Congress, but, it's obvious, whatever it takes, Republicans **must** band together to repeal and replace Obamacare and help Mr. Trump follow through with the promises that got him elected. They don't seem to get that.

Repeal and replace Obamacare was one of Mr. Trump's top priorities. The Republicans in this country have waited eight years for the Obama administration to end. The Republicans now own Congress **and** the White House.

So, my question to the Republican leadership in Congress is the following: What the hell were you guys doing for the past seven years after Obamacare passed? Why didn't you start working on a replacement bill that everyone could agree upon? Over the years, I heard a lot of promises. Why wasn't a win by a Republican President anticipated so that when the time came, a bill could be rolled out, already agreed upon by everyone, voted on, passed and given to the President to sign?

Okay. I may be a little obsessive compulsive in my planning abilities. Maybe looking ahead seven years is a bit much.

But, I would ask them, why didn't you start working on the repeal and replacement of Obamacare the day after Election Day? You had almost three months before Inauguration Day to come up with a plan that everyone could agree upon, including President Trump.

Back in March, Paul Ryan supposedly had some cockamamie health plan but postponed a vote because it was a terrible plan and he knew he didn't have the votes. It was not only embarrassing for the President but it made the Republicans look like liars or complete incompetents. It made the rest of us frustrated. Do the Republicans in Congress actually want this President to fail? Isn't it bad enough 90% of the mainstream media and the left want nothing more to see him go down in flames? It's absolutely disgraceful.

This month, Paul Ryan and his crew scrambled to put together another bill to meet some self-imposed deadline. It passed the House. Now, the Senate's working on its own bill. After all this time, everyone still isn't onboard forcing Mitch McConnell to delay the Senate vote until after July 4th. The deadline they should've set for themselves began on November 9th and ended January 20th.

Reacting is not a sign of leadership. **Action** – not reaction – is. Unfortunately, all Congress seems to do is react. The House reacts to the President's request to get things done. The Senate is now reacting to the House. And they call themselves "leaders." Pathetic.

With Congress going home for the holiday, the Wall Street Journal reported on June 28th, "from now until Congress' return, there is likely to be a run of deal-making, arm-twisting and lobbying." Incredibly astonishing and extremely

disappointing.

They've had seven years to have a plan in place. If that was too much to ask, they had since November 9th to come up with something upon which everyone could agree. Period. No excuses. And then they wonder why the American people have absolutely no confidence in Congress?

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.

On Healthcare, Trump is Giving Us What We Paid For



In a piece I wrote last October, I presented the argument that of all the GOP presidential candidates that primary voters had to choose from in the election, Donald Trump was the last person Republicans should have trusted to take on Obamacare.

The nominee rarely talked about the issue during the campaign, despite opposition to the Affordable Care Act being a big reason for why the GOP had made significant gains in congress since 2010. And when Trump did weigh in on healthcare, his rhetoric was usually incomprehensible. Though vowing to repeal the ACA (on grounds of costliness and government restriction), he complimented government-run *single-payer* coverage and promoted universal healthcare. He even took opportunities to parrot left-wing talking points, equating Republicans' free market ideas to letting people "die on the sidewalks."

Though Candidate Trump's reflexively liberal stances on various topics were well-documented throughout the campaign, the broader picture on healthcare seemed to be that he neither understood nor particularly cared about the issue. After all, *Making America Great Again* wasn't about details or serious plans, but rather harnessing populist sentiment. Trump understood that it's much easier to demagogue a complicated concern than it is to offer a credible solution (especially one that involves rolling back a government entitlement). So, he punted. And many on the Right shrugged.

Six months into the Trump presidency, despite multiple attempts to pass healthcare-reform legislation, GOP majorities in the House and Senate haven't been able to get the job done. They're about to head home for their Fourth of July recess with nothing beyond a continually changing bill to show for it.

There are a few reasons for this, including too much disorganization and little consensus within the Republican party, and the shameless scare tactics of the Democrats (including the disgusting claim that GOP reform will literally "kill" people). But perhaps the biggest problem – as I had worried back in the election-cycle – is Trump himself.

Part of the issue is the president's chronically low approval

numbers. They're symptomatic of the lack of trust Americans have in him. Trump's petty conduct, his dishonesty, and the needless fights he picks have assisted the media in expending his political capital. Obamacare now has more public support than ever before, in large part because of that trust deficit.

Another element – a big one – is that the man who ran for the White House as a consummate *deal-maker* appears to have little idea of what he's doing.

Reporting for *The Weekly Standard* earlier this week, Andrew Egger wrote that “the president's efforts are hindered by the fact that he seems to care more about signing a bill than he does about the policy issues at stake. Several senators who have spoken with Trump about the evolving legislation describe an executive with little apparent understanding of the basic principles of the reforms and virtually no understanding of the details.”

This shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone who has listened to Trump's vague healthcare remarks. At times, the president can't even seem to agree with himself on the matter, categorizing a version of the House-passed bill that *he* supported as “mean.”

Speaking to Republican senators at the White House the other day, the president said of the struggling legislation, “This will be great if we get it done. And if we don't get it done, it's just going to be something that we're not going to like, and that's okay, and I understand that very well.”

I can't imagine such remarks instilled a lot of confidence.

Of course, it's not fair to place all of the blame on Trump. Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell have also made mistakes, seemingly caught unprepared to effectively deal with an issue that Republican candidates had been running on (and winning with) for eight years.

But President Trump is the leader of the party. His failure to understand the inner-workings of a bill that he claims is great, and effectively communicate that *greatness* to the electorate, has become a major hindrance. Trump may be a strong salesman when it comes to himself, but when advocating for policy, the results haven't been particularly good.

Also at fault: Republican voters. Yes, you.

If the issue of healthcare were as important to Republicans and conservatives as we had been insisting for years, we would have nominated someone who had some passion (or at least enough interest to understand it) to help lead the effort against Obamacare. We didn't do that. We instead (at least a plurality of us) got behind the guy who repeatedly said (on the few occasions when he actually talked about healthcare) that he was going to cover "everyone" and that the "government will pay" for it. Not exactly "repeal and replace" rhetoric.

Whether or not you believe that other Republican candidates would have defeated Hillary Clinton (I personally think several of them had a good shot), we shouldn't be at all surprised that President Trump has been this weak on the issue. He doesn't care or know enough about it to effectively sell reform ideas – not to his party's leaders and not to the constituents they work for.

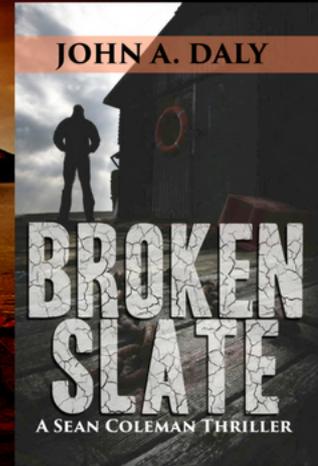
Thus, there's a pretty good chance that when something eventually does get passed, the bill will look even more like Obamacare than the current one does...and a lot less like what Republican voters have been demanding for nearly a decade. Something tells me that the president and his most loyal supporters would be perfectly fine with that, but it would be a huge failure for both the party and the country.

Thirty years ago, Sean's father mysteriously abandoned his family in the Colorado mountains. He was never seen again. **This October, the truth comes home.**

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