Senate GOP Bill Would Leave 22 More Million Uninsured, CBO Says

**By****Kerry Young****, CQ Roll Call** June 26, 2017 – 4:36 p.m.

A Senate GOP health bill would increase the number of uninsured Americans by 22 million over a decade to 49 million, slightly less than a House measure would, the [Congressional Budget Office said Monday](http://plus.cq.com/doc/govdoc-5130828). This estimate likely will increase the challenges for Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](http://plus.cq.com/person/202) of Kentucky in trying to pass the bill before the July Fourth recess.

The Senate bill would save $321 billion over a decade, $202 billion more than CBO last month said the House bill would.

The effects on coverage would start to occur quickly. In 2018, 15 million more people would be uninsured under the bill than under current law, CBO said.

Under the Senate bill, average premiums for plans for single individuals would be about 20 percent higher in 2018 than under current law, in large part because the penalty for not having insurance would be eliminated, so fewer healthy people would enroll. Premiums would be about 10 percent higher than under current law in 2019, CBO said in its analysis of the Senate bill. But, in 2020, average premiums for benchmark plans for single individuals would be about 30 percent lower than under current law, CBO said.

The eye-popping coverage reductions will exacerbate McConnell's hurdles in gaining unity among his fractured GOP conference. Several Senate Republicans raised doubts in recent days about whether they would vote for a motion to proceed to the bill if McConnell tries to hold it on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Senate Republicans largely stuck with the basic blueprint for tax, Medicaid and insurance changes in the bill ([HR 1628](http://plus.cq.com/bill/115/HR1628)) that the House passed 217-213 last month. Many House Republicans said they expected the Senate to improve on their bill, which sparked protests from major medical and consumer groups. Critics say people will miss out on needed medical care due to restrained future growth in federal Medicaid spending and scaled-back insurance regulations.

Democrats are united in their opposition to the bill, which repeals or delays taxes created by the 2010 health law ([PL 111-148](http://plus.cq.com/law/111/148), [PL 111-152](http://plus.cq.com/law/111/152)). McConnell is using special budget rules known as reconciliation, which allows measures to move in the Senate on simple majority votes and avoid filibusters. With Vice President Mike Pence able to break a tie, McConnell needs the backing of 50 of the chamber's 52 Republicans to pass the bill.

Several Republicans, including Sen. [Dean Heller](http://plus.cq.com/person/7376) of Nevada, have protested publicly about how deeply the bill would scale back Medicaid funding. Heller said Friday he was not prepared to vote to proceed to the bill. The measure would phase out the Medicaid expansion created by Democrats’ 2010 health law and also would reduce growth in future federal spending on the giant health program through a system of caps.

McConnell must contend with protests from fellow Senate Republicans about how quickly he’s moving the bill, for which there has not been one public hearing this year in the chamber. Sen. [Ron Johnson](http://plus.cq.com/person/32657), R-Wis., is among those asking for more time to review the bill.