

MAGA world signals it will protect Medicaid

There are growing signs that Trump-aligned forces are ready to go to war with House Republicans if they attempt to pass large Medicaid spending cuts.

Driving the news: New polling from a top Trump campaign pollster shared exclusively with Axios has found the Medicaid program is popular among all voters, including those who cast their ballot for Trump — yet another sign of the political peril of cutting it.

The results of the polls aren't surprising; it's the names of the firms conducting them and concluding that lawmakers who vote to cut Medicaid could lose voter support.

The big picture: Some proponents of major spending reductions within the Medicaid program say they're simply eliminating waste, fraud and abuse, or returning the program to its original purpose.

It's been unclear whether moderate Republicans in the House and Senate will buy this line. It's now becoming increasingly unclear whether MAGA world will, either.

Zoom in: New polling conducted by McLaughlin & Associates — a top Trump campaign polling firm — found overwhelming majorities of voters in battleground congressional districts support the Medicaid program, including 78% of Trump supporters.

The poll was paid for by Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, which operates hospitals in Louisiana and Mississippi. The group has also hired Chris LaCivita Jr., son of Trump 2024 co-campaign manager Chris LaCivita, to lobby for it.

"Voters clearly want Congress not only to protect Medicaid, but they will reward those who strengthen Medicaid and increase benefits to patients," pollster Jim McLaughlin said in a statement.

Similarly ominous polling for congressional Republicans looking to make cuts to the program was released earlier this month by the firm of Tony Fabrizio, another Trump 2024 campaign pollster, Politico reported.

What they're saying: "It would just be absolutely detrimental to Republicans to cut Medicaid, cut Social Security, and the president has been very clear in saying we will never touch it," a key MAGA-world adviser and source close to the administration told Axios.

"If you talk to MAGA Republicans, no MAGA Republican wants to touch it. The only people who want to touch it are part of the old guard [GOP] establishment, who are becoming extinct."

"We don't own them, we don't want them in our party. Our people, our allies will be firmly against it," the person added.

State of play: Medicaid cuts have become a major piece of GOP congressional negotiations over extending the tax cuts passed during President Trump's first term, as budget hawks want the package to address federal spending deficits.

How and whether to shave hundreds of billions of dollars of spending from the program over the next decade has become a contentious question even among Republicans, who failed to successfully do so in their 2017 effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

Significant changes to Medicaid expansion, including reducing the amount the federal government pays for Medicaid expansion enrollees — which is currently 90% of the total tab — appear to very much still be in play.

So is limiting state provider taxes, which ultimately lead to higher federal spending.

"We're going to protect Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid for people who are legally beneficiaries of those programs," House Speaker Mike Johnson recently said on Fox News.

"We have to root out fraud, waste, and abuse. We have to eliminate people on, for example, on Medicaid who are not actually eligible to be there — able-bodied workers, for example, young men who are — who should never be on the program at all," he added.

What to watch: The White House so far isn't weighing in on the specifics of what it wants to see, but issued a statement that offers hope to those seeking some level of cuts, without drawing any red lines.

"The Trump administration is committed to protecting Medicaid while slashing the waste, fraud, and abuse within the program — reforms that will increase efficiency and improve care for beneficiaries," White House spokesperson Kush Desai said in a statement.

The bottom line: "If this starts becoming an issue, I believe MAGA Republicans will come in and save the day if needed," the MAGA-world adviser said.