

Republicans bristle at Trump's health care play

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Rep. Thomas Massie is vocalizing what many GOP lawmakers are saying privately about President Trump's Obamacare pitch.

Welcome back to Donald Trump's Art of the Deal: Health Care Edition.

The news, first reported by POLITICO, that the president is considering endorsing a two-year extension of Obamacare subsidies is essentially jump-starting health care talks that need to be resolved in 36 days to avert a nationwide spike in insurance premiums.

The final details of Trump's plan are in limbo as the White House faces a GOP divided, Benjamin, Jordain Carney, Cheyenne Haslett and Alice Miranda Ollstein report.

"Oh boy, more 4D chess? A vote to extend Obamacare ... that's the Republican solution to health care?" Rep. **Thomas Massie** said on X, vocalizing what many GOP lawmakers are saying privately.

But even less-than-thrilled Republicans are accepting the fact that Trump is the only man with a plan that matters, even if the specifics are fuzzy and the general thrust is at odds with conservative orthodoxy (though not with an emerging White House focus on affordability politics).

"I don't like the subsidies," Rep. **Tim Burchett** tells Jordain. "But everybody griping about it doesn't have a plan, so get some guts, put up a plan ... or get the heck out of the way."

While restrictions the White House is considering for subsidy eligibility are in line with what many conservatives have been seeking, Republicans say they're in the dark about how Trump intends to address the use of funds for abortions — a concern that could very well doom the plan with many GOP lawmakers as anti-abortion advocates threaten retaliation.

For now, some Democrats are privately optimistic just based on the fact that the White House is floating any kind of subsidy extension.

A bipartisan group of House and Senate lawmakers held a conference call Monday night to discuss next steps, according to a person granted anonymity to share details of the conversation. Sen. **Jeanne Shaheen** and Rep. **Josh Gottheimer** were among the participants. One member on the call told Jordain bipartisan conversations are going "well," adding that "most of us have similar ideas on how to reach consensus."

“If the reports are true and the president is considering coming to the table in good faith, I believe we can find a path forward that can earn broad bipartisan support in Congress,” Shaheen said in a statement earlier Monday.

While Burchett says Trump is showing “some guts,” it’s not clear whether the president ultimately blinks or sticks by what appears to be a clear political calculation.

The chances for a big policy rollout this week appear to be fading: No health-focused event is listed on the White House schedule today, with Trump set to depart for his Mar-a-Lago Thanksgiving in the evening.