

Trump draws line in sand on extending ACA credits

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President Donald Trump on Tuesday gave his sharpest rebuke of Congressional Democrats' efforts to extend expiring Affordable Care Act enhanced tax credits, saying he would not support legislation to do so.

The announcement, made through a post on Truth Social, comes as Senate Republicans and the White House had promised to enter earnest negotiations with Democrats on health care as a condition of ending the government shutdown.

Trump has pushed for lawmakers to consider policies that would send money to individuals to subsidize health care costs rather than by lowering premiums paid to insurance companies participating in the marketplace.

“THE ONLY HEALTHCARE I WILL SUPPORT OR APPROVE IS SENDING THE MONEY DIRECTLY BACK TO THE PEOPLE, WITH NOTHING GOING TO THE BIG, FAT, RICH INSURANCE COMPANIES,” Trump said in the post. “Congress, do not waste your time and energy on anything else. This is the only way to have great Healthcare in America!!!”

Trump's warning further complicates a split among lawmakers on a path to reducing health care costs before the end of the year. Democrats and some Republicans want the credits extended for at least one year.

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise told reporters after a GOP conference meeting on Tuesday that committee leaders are proposing ideas he said could lower premiums, including potential bills expanding health savings accounts and association health plans.

Scalise said the slate of bills include some that have already advanced through committees, but he didn't name them. He expects to bring bills for a vote by the end of the year and dismissed the Senate's planned mid-December vote to extend the ACA subsidies that Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., promised Democrats.

“The Senate's going in a different direction,” Scalise said. “We're not here to bail out insurance companies. We're here to give families lower premiums and better options.”

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., defended Democrats' position that a tax credit extension is needed.

“Donald Trump's unhinged ramblings shows he still has no idea how anything actually works,” Schumer said in a statement. “Americans want Congress to extend the ACA tax credits to keep health insurance premiums from skyrocketing on January 1.”

Last week, Democrats in the House filed a discharge petition to force a vote on legislation that would extend the credits for three years.

Senate Republicans, meanwhile, are forming legislation to do what Trump called for. Louisiana GOP Sen. Bill Cassidy, who chairs the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, has floated sending the \$26 billion that would be spent on the enhanced premium tax credits to health savings accounts. To access that funding, people would need to sign up for high-deductible bronze-level plans on the ACA exchanges.

The Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Affordable Care Act, is scheduled to hold a hearing Wednesday on how to lower health care costs.