

Paul halts effort to pass health care price transparency bill - Politico

Bipartisan legislation to add requirements to hospitals and other facilities to publish pricing information, which otherwise enjoys broad support, was blocked in the Senate on Wednesday by Sen. [Rand Paul](#), who has criticized the legislation in the past. The bill ([S 2355](#)) from Sens. [Roger Marshall](#), R-Kan., and [John Hickenlooper](#), D-Colo., would direct hospitals to publish prices and information like discounts and negotiated costs. It also would extend price transparency requirements to clinical laboratories, imaging centers and ambulatory surgical centers, and would increase the penalties for hospitals and insurers that do not disclose their negotiated rates.

Marshall asked for unanimous consent that the Senate move to immediate consideration and pass the measure, known as the Patients Deserve Price Tags Act. It only takes one objection to prevent such a request.

In July when the [measure was approved](#) 21-1 at the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, Paul was the lone vote against it. The problem, Paul, R-Ky., said on the Senate floor Wednesday, is that prices are fixed for Medicare, Medicaid and private insurers. He said only a small amount of the market, those who pay upfront because they are uninsured or are choosing elective procedures, need to know prices -- and many of them already know what they'll be charged. "This legislation is well intended, but also misguided. It doesn't address the root problem and in all likelihood will not reduce any health care prices," he said. "It just adds one more government mandate."

Proponents of the bill have aimed to get it passed before the end of the year. Similar legislation [advanced](#) at the House Energy and Commerce Committee ([HR 9393](#), view [substitute amendment text](#)), sponsored by Chairman [Brett Guthrie](#), R-Ky., though it is more narrowly focused than the Senate bill.

Cynthia Fisher, founder and chair of [PatientRightsAdvocate.org](#), said Americans were "one vote away" from providing workers, employers and unions with upfront prices. "Americans are close to getting the real prices they need to hold hospitals and insurers accountable for overcharges before the bills arrive," Fisher said.