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# JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

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Number 73

July 2017

## Shredding the Health Safety Net

### The Moral Folly of "Repeal and Replace" Now or Later

by Fred Kammer, S.J.

#### JSRI Future Activities

##### August 2

Dr. Bustamante will testify alongside SEIU 32BJ at Broward County Commission in support of the Living Wage Ordinance Amendment in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

##### August 2-3

Fr. Kammer will give a series of talks to clergy, parish staffs, and the public in El Paso on Catholic social thought and immigration.

##### August 7

Fr. Kammer will inaugurate a series of talks on Catholic Social Thought at Most Holy Trinity Parish in Covington, LA.

##### August 9

Fr. Kammer will lead a planning session for Ignatian Solidarity Network in Washington, D.C.

##### August 11

Dr. Bustamante will present Institutional Response to Social Justice Issues at the [Association of Jesuit College and Universities 2017 Justice Conference](#).

#### JSRI Recent Activities

July 17-18

Over the past 50 years, Medicare, Medicaid, and other measures moved our health care system closer to the Catholic principle that health care is a natural right rooted in the sanctity and dignity of the human person.



#### News Release

July 13, 2017- Today's release of the updated Senate Better Care Reconciliation Act reinforces the fact that this bill is so flawed it cannot be fixed. The proposed changes do not amend the core issue that this bill will ultimately take health care away from millions of our nation's most vulnerable populations.

Source: 2017. [Latest Version of Senate Bill Leaves Millions Without Insurance](#). Catholic Health Association

Most recently, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010 added protection of that right for more than 24 million Americans[1] who still did not have affordable and comprehensive care and protected 52 million people with pre-existing medical conditions. Now, the American Health Care Act, passed on May 4 by the U.S. House, and the Better Care Reconciliation Act, introduced in June into the U.S. Senate, have threatened not just to roll back the ACA and its protections but to deny coverage under the ACA and Medicaid to 23 (House) or 22 (Senate) million Americans. It also will upend insurance markets, savage state budgets, drive up unemployment, and badly impact rural communities.

Fr. Kammer led a discussion on social analysis with the international Jesuit Volunteers during their orientation at the University of Scranton.

### July 11

Dr. Weishar participated in an Advisory Board meeting of El Pueblo/Seashore Mission in Biloxi, MS.

### July 9

Dr. Weishar participated in an Advisory Board meeting of the Gillespie Memorial Community Breakfast at the First Unitarian Church of New Orleans.

### July 7

The Development Committee of the JSRI Advisory Board met in New Orleans.

### July 6

Dr. Weishar participated in a planning meeting of the New Orleans Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition at First Grace Methodist Church of New Orleans.

### July 5

Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Weishar participated in a planning meeting of the Symposium for Systemic Change at St. Vincent de Paul in Baton Rouge, LA.

### June 28

Dr. Weishar was interviewed by Fox 8 WVUE New Orleans on the impact of the SCOTUS ruling on President Trump's travel ban.

### June 24

Dr. Weishar was the keynote speaker for the Louisiana African Solidarity Response's celebrations of World Refugee Day at the Student Union of Louisiana State University.

Senators promised that their bill would be different from that of the House, and President Trump termed the House Bill "mean." The Senate, however, kept most of the terrible House provisions and their negative consequences[2]:

- Tens of millions of people lose health coverage.
- Millions of low-income adults lose Medicaid expansion.
- Medicaid for seniors, people with disabilities, and children is capped and cut.
- Tax credits are cut and premiums raised by thousands of dollars for many older people.
- Individual market premiums rise by 20 percent for 2018.
- Insurers can drop coverage for maternity care, mental health, and substance abuse.
- Opioid addiction coverage is cut by billions of dollars.
- Survival of rural hospitals dependent on Medicaid is threatened.
- Employer and individual mandates to purchase insurance will be ended.

On July 13 the Senate's second version, while reversing two House tax cuts, still included nearly \$400 billion in tax cuts primarily for high-income households and corporations, including new tax cuts for Health Savings Accounts. *The core of the bill remained tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations financed by cutting assistance to help millions of low-and moderate-income families afford health coverage.*[3] This bill retained the massive cuts to Medicaid that made the House and first Senate bills so morally repugnant. It provoked negative responses from insurance companies, patient groups, the U.S. Catholic Bishops, and health care provider groups such as the Catholic Health Association.

Then, on Monday, July 17, four Republican senators indicated they could not support the bill, ending the likelihood of its passing. Now the Senate apparently will cast a vote next week just to end the ACA and then get around to replacing it in the next two years.

This turns the clock back, not a decade but *50 years*. It would end the Medicaid guarantee of the 1960s that, if you meet state eligibility standards, you have a right to coverage. The House bill ends that guarantee by block grants and the Senate bill by "per capita caps." The outcome is the same, rolling back the Medicaid expansion under the ACA and severely cutting all Medicaid funding by 26 percent in the next ten years and by 35 percent in the following decade in the Senate proposal.[4]

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office found that a repeal-only bill would cause 32 million more people to be uninsured by 2026, double insurance premiums, and virtually collapse the individual market.

Why would Congress do this? The fundamental rationale for moving legislation forward under special budget rules *is to provide billions of dollars of tax cuts to wealthy taxpayers and corporations* in this bill and the upcoming tax "reform" package. They will prosper even more while tens of millions of Americans suffer.

We must tell our senators today (call Senate switchboard at (202) 224-3121):

- a. Vote against any repeal or "repeal and replace" bill.
- b. Preserve Medicaid and support the Medicaid expansion.

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NETWORK

- c. Maintain individual and employer mandates to keep health insurance more affordable.
- d. Forbid insurers from limiting benefits to anyone with pre-existing conditions, reducing essential core benefits, or charging higher premiums to older adults.
- e. Preserve the subsidies that help people purchase insurance in the state or federal marketplaces.

[1] Kaiser Family Foundation, [What's At Stake with the ACA Repeal](#), June 16, 2017.

[2] Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [Roundup: Analyzing the Senate GOP Health Bill](#), July 5, 2017.

[3] Brandon DeBot, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [Wealthy Corporations Still Win Big Under Revised Senate GOP Health Bill](#), July 13, 2017.

[4] Congressional Budget Office, [Longer-Term Effects of the Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 on Medicaid Spending](#), June 2017, p. 1.

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*Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans. Please send feedback to [jsri@loyno.edu](mailto:jsri@loyno.edu)*

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