

《Trump threatens to end insurance payments if no healthcare b》

US President Donald Trump threatened on Saturday to end government payments to health insurers if Congress does not pass a new healthcare bill and goaded them to not abandon their seven-year quest to replace the Obamacare law.

In a Twitter message on Saturday, Trump said "if a new HealthCare Bill is not approved quickly, BAILOUTS for Insurance Companies and BAILOUTS for Members of Congress will end very soon!"

The tweet came a day after Senate Republicans failed to muster enough votes to repeal parts of the Affordable Care Act, former President Barack Obama's signature healthcare bill commonly known as Obamacare.

The first part of Trump's tweet appeared to be referring to the approximately 8 billion US dollars in cost-sharing reduction subsidies the federal government pays to insurers to lower the price of health coverage for low-income Americans.

The second part appeared to be a threat to end the employer contribution for Congress members and their staffs, who were moved from the normal federal employee healthcare benefits program onto the Obamacare insurance exchanges as part of the 2010 healthcare law.

Trump has previously threatened to suspend the payments to insurers, which are determined by the Department of Health and Human Services. In April, he threatened to end the payments if Democrats refused to negotiate over the healthcare bill.



Trump tweeted a day after Senate Republicans failed to muster enough votes to repeal Obamacare. / Screen Shot

Responding to Saturday's tweet, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said that if the president carried out that threat, "every expert agrees that (insurance) premiums will go up and health care will be more expensive for millions of Americans."

"The president ought to stop playing politics with people's lives and health care, start leading and finally begin acting presidential," Schumer said in a statement.

Trump later urged Senate Republicans to try again on a healthcare vote. The Senate is in session for another week before it is scheduled to begin an August recess.

"Unless the Republican Senators are total quitters, Repeal & Replace is not dead! Demand another vote before voting on any other bill!" Trump said in a subsequent tweet.

Many insurers have been waiting for an answer from Trump or lawmakers on whether they will continue to fund the annual government subsidies. Without assurances, many plan to raise rates an additional 20 percent by an Aug. 16 deadline for premium prices.

With Republican efforts to dismantle Obamacare in disarray, hundreds of US counties are at risk of losing access to private health coverage in 2018 as insurers consider pulling out of those markets.

In response, Trump on Friday again suggested his administration would let the Obamacare program "implode." He has weakened enforcement of the law's requirement for individuals to buy insurance and threatened to cut off funding and sought to change plan benefits through regulations.

(Source: Reuters)

