

# Utah congressmen support bill repealing key parts of Affordable Care Act



## St. George News

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January 7, 2016

Link: <http://www.stgeorgeutah.com/news/archive/2016/01/07/dig-utah-congressmen-support-bill-repealing-key-parts-of-affordable-care-act/#.VpBAmpKrKUI>

ST.GEORGE — House Bill 3762 — Restoring Americans’ Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015 — was passed by the House of Representatives Wednesday and now will go to the desk of President Obama, who has already said he will veto the bill.

The Restoring Americans’ Healthcare Freedom bill was originally passed by the House Oct. 23, 2015, but was amended by the Senate because it had been passed by a “budget reconciliation” process in the House. The Senate passed the amended bill Dec. 3, 2015, and the House passed it, as amended, Jan. 6. A bill passed via a “budget reconciliation” has a unique set of rules the Senate can only use once per year. These rules state that the Senate can pass the bill with only a simple majority vote instead of the three-fifths vote needed to avoid a potential filibuster.

In order for the bill to qualify for the budget reconciliation exception, Republicans in favor of the bill had to ensure that the provisions within the bill were directly related to budgetary matters. One of the changes they made was to the individual mandates section of the bill, which was found to lack relevance to budget issues. To make the bill qualify, the Senate changed the bill to eliminate the tax penalties used for enforcement of the individual mandate section of the Affordable Care Act.

President Obama released a statement, saying in part:

The Administration strongly opposes Senate passage of the Senate amendment to H.R. 3762. By repealing numerous, key elements of current law, this legislation would take away critical benefits and health care coverage from hard-working middle-class families. The bill also would remove policies that are expected to help slow the growth in health care costs and that have improved the quality of care patients receive. The Senate amendment to H.R. 3762 detracts from the work the Congress could be doing to foster job creation and economic growth.

The amendments that the Restoring Americans’ Healthcare Freedom bill enacts include the following:

- Restrict the federal government from operating health care exchanges
- Phase out funding for subsidies to help lower and middle-income individuals afford insurance through the health care exchanges
- Eliminate tax penalties for individuals who do not purchase health insurance and employers with 50 or more employees who do not provide insurance plans
- Eliminate taxes on medical devices and the so-called “Cadillac tax” on the most expensive health care plans
- Phase out an expansion of Medicaid over a two-year period
- The bill would also end federal funding of Planned Parenthood for a period of one year by enacting Medicare reimbursement prohibitions for services offered by Planned Parenthood. The bill would then increase funding toward a “community health program.”

Senator Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, issued the following statement concerning the bill:

*Today, Congress let the will of the American people be heard and sent an Obamacare repeal bill to the President's desk. Higher premiums, higher taxes, less opportunity and diminished access to care is not what this administration promised and is exactly why Americans continue to oppose this law. With this legislation, the President has a real opportunity to finally put an end to the flawed policies that have crippled household budgets and limited patient access to quality care and instead work with Republicans to implement patient-centered reforms to effectively address rising costs and increase choice for more Americans.*

Utah Rep. Chris Stewart also spoke out in defense of the legislation.

*"This is a big deal," Stewart said. "Obamacare is hurting hard-working families in Utah, and I've been fighting to repeal it since I came to Congress. While I've voted to repeal Obamacare dozens of times, this is the first time it's being sent to the President's desk for a signature. "This bill also significantly defunds Planned Parenthood. The federal government shouldn't be in the business of giving millions of dollars to an organization that participates in inhumane practices. While I'm guessing that the President will veto this legislation, we need to get him on the record. We can not stop fighting for Utah's values."*

Utah Rep. Jason Chaffetz was also in favor of the bill, releasing the following statement:

Today the House did its job. Obamacare has been a disaster since it was forced on the American people over five years ago. People are paying more and getting less. Likewise, Planned Parenthood provides no unique services worthy of federal subsidies from the American taxpayer. The president has hidden behind Senate Democrats for far too long. Now, he must choose whether to stand with the American people or stand behind his failures.

"We don't see this as changing anything for the 150,000 Utahns who have signed up for Obamacare," Jason Stevenson, education and communications director of the Utah Health Policy Project said.

"Unfortunately it just shows that some people still don't understand that the Affordable Care Act is making insurance more affordable, making it more accessible, it's bringing families into coverage — previously they were uninsured — and helping reform our health care system."

The ACA is doing all the things those who politically opposed the program say they want: private markets, patient-oriented care and cutting out red tape, Stevenson said.

"The politicalization of this has made it so they can't admit it on the record," Stevenson said. "U.S. representatives understand that people are signing up and that it is helping them obtain health care coverage. However, they also hear plenty of criticism from the other constituents who hate the Affordable Care Act. How much of that is misdirected, but they still hear it and that is what they use to guide their public statements."

"This is press-release politics," Stevenson said.