

# Health Care in Motion

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## Showdown at Zero-Dark-Thirty: Senate Rejects Affordable Care Act Repeal in Dramatic Vote-a-Rama

After months of ups and downs and a dramatic final showdown on the Senate floor, the saga of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress' effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) came to a conclusion in the early hours of Friday, July 28<sup>th</sup>. After rejecting numerous measures for more robust repeals, the Senate faced a vote on the [Health Care Freedom Act](#), a “skinny bill” that would have repealed only the ACA's individual and employer mandates, along with a [few other policy changes](#). In the end, Senators Susan Collins (R-ME), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and John McCain (R-AZ) joined with the chamber's 48 Democrats to [reject the measure](#), essentially ending the Republicans' seven year push to repeal the ACA.

But despite the [drama](#) of the “no” vote, the fight over the ACA is far from over. President Trump has already [made clear](#) that he bears no goodwill towards the ACA. In the coming months, there are many things that the Trump Administration can do to actively undermine the ACA's programs.

However, for now advocates should:

1. Congratulate themselves on a successful defense of the ACA. This outcome would not be possible without the robust engagement of advocates.
2. Thank Senators who voted to protect access to care.
3. Prepare for the coming battles on the state and federal level to protect the ACA.

### Senate Rejects Repeal Attempts in Narrowly Divided Vote

After a [whirlwind](#) of events this week, leadership's vote was transformed from a repeal and replace package (the BCRA), to a revised version of a 2015 bill [vetoed](#) by President Obama that would have repealed critical portions of the ACA without a replacement package, and finally to a so-called “skinny” repeal bill that would have repealed fewer (albeit still critical) portions of the ACA, hoping to pass anything in order to proceed to a conference committee with the House.

In the early morning hours of July 28, the Senate formally [rejected](#) leadership's pared-down repeal bill in a 51-49 vote.

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Republican Senators [Susan Collins](#) (R-ME), [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-AK) and, to the surprise of many, [John McCain](#) (R-AZ), joined their 48 Democratic colleagues in voting no. Shortly after the defeat, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-KY) [stated](#) that “It’s time to move on,” signaling either that the Senate plans to engage in bipartisan discussions to improve our health care system, or leave the issue altogether. President Donald J. Trump also quickly [weighed in](#), stating that Congress should “let [the ACA] implode...” and deal with the aftermath later.

## Threats Remain

While the events of this week are surely a success, advocates should, after taking a moment to celebrate and regroup, remember that the Administration continues to wield [considerable influence](#) over the future of the ACA’s programs. For example, the Administration has yet to commit to funding the ACA’s cost-sharing reductions, a decision which will [substantially impact](#) the health of the ACA’s Marketplaces. Further, the Department of Health and Human Services holds considerable discretion to allow states greater leeway to design their Medicaid programs, and has [previously indicated](#) a willingness to provide more flexibility than previous administrations—including by allowing some proposals that would reduce access to care for vulnerable populations. Watch for an upcoming *Health Care in Motion* article that takes a deep dive into these threats and their potential impacts.

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