These 13 Men Are Writing the GOP Senate Health Care Bill

By excluding women from the working group, are Republicans hampering the bill's chance of passing?

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Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has chosen 12 lawmakers to aid him in crafting a new health care bill—and not one of them is a woman or African American, reports The New York Times.

Last week, Republican members of the House of Representatives passed the American Health Care Act, a bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (the ACA, or Obamacare). The Senate must now weigh in on the legislation, but as Senator Orrin Hatch (R–Utah) told the Times: "Let's face it, the House bill isn't going to pass over here." Therefore, the working group was established to create new legislation.

Including more conservative senators and excluding women such as Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska as well as junior members Deb Fischer of Nebraska and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia—says a lot about McConnell's direction, the Times notes. Collins and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, in particular, may cause trouble for the bill. And McConnell has little room for error because a few GOP senators could hold near-veto power.

Here's the math: Republicans hold 52 seats in the 100-seat Senate. No Democrats will support the GOP health care bill; nor is it likely that the two independents will. This means that if more than two Republicans vote against the bill, it is dead. (In the case of a 50-50 vote, Vice President Mike Pence would break the tie.)

According to the Times, the members of the Senate's health care working group are:

- Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, Senate majority leader
- John Cornyn of Texas, majority whip
- Mike Lee of Utah, one of the Senate's more conservative members
- John Thune of South Dakota, chairman of the Senate Republican Conference

- John Barrasso of Wyoming, chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee
- Orrin G. Hatch of Utah, chairman of the Finance Committee
- Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, chairman of the Senate health committee
- Michael B. Enzi of Wyoming, head of the Budget Committee
- Tom Cotton of Arkansas, whose state expanded Medicaid under the ACA
- Ted Cruz of Texas, one of the Senate's most conservative members
- Cory Gardner of Colorado, whose state expanded Medicaid under the ACA
- Rob Portman of Ohio, whose state expanded Medicaid under the ACA
- Patrick J. Toomey of Pennsylvania, whose state expanded Medicaid under the ACA

Democrats said that excluding women from working on a bill that directly impacts them is politically clueless and just plain wrong.

To read how AIDS groups responded to the House health care bill, click here.

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