

Trump rips into Republicans after healthcare defeat

UNITED STATES
Washington DC

President Donald Trump lashed out at fellow Republicans in Congress on Saturday after suffering a major setback when the Senate failed to repeal and replace Obamacare.

Two Republican women — Senators Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski — along with John McCain joined Democrats in a dramatic thumbs-down vote that triggered the stunning collapse of Trump's health reforms.

But the president demanded that lawmakers revisit the hot-button issue, taunting them by saying that otherwise they are no more than "total quitters".

"Unless the Republican Senators are total quitters, Repeal & Replace is not dead! Demand another vote before voting on any other bill!" he wrote in a series of angry tweets over the space of several hours.

However, some lawmakers are also seeking a new path on health reform.

Republican Senators Lindsey Graham, Bill Cassidy and Dean Heller met with Trump on Friday on a plan that would task states — rather than the federal government — with crafting healthcare plans.

In an ominous warning, Trump appeared to threaten lawmakers that he would cut their healthcare benefits if they do not "quickly" approve a new bill.

"If a new healthcare Bill is not approved quickly, bailouts for insurance companies and bailouts for Members of Congress will end very soon!" he wrote.

In an early morning tweet, he urged senators to end the legislative filibuster. Senate rules set a 60-vote minimum threshold to pass most



Protesters carrying signs during a healthcare rally in front of Trump Tower in New York on Saturday. AFP photo

legislation.

Yet the Republicans' Obamacare repeal measures only required a 51-vote majority in the Senate due to the process the chamber's leaders chose to push it through.

Republicans currently have 52 seats and Vice-President Mike Pence casts a vote when there is a tie.

But the 60-vote requirement makes senators "look like fools," Trump said, adding that "8 Dems totally control the US Senate."

"Republicans in the Senate will never win if they do not go to a 51 vote majority now. They look like fools and are just wasting time," he wrote.

There are growing signs, however, that Trump's threats against skeptical Republicans are losing potency.

Republicans not only

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Trump

killed efforts to dismantle Obamacare, but also joined Democrats in supporting a new sanctions regime against Russia.

The party rebellion is a deeply ominous sign for Trump, whose political brand is defined by his dealmaking acumen and a take-no-prisoners approach to politics.

Trump lashes out at China
Meanwhile, Trump warned

on Saturday that he would not allow China to "do nothing" on North Korea, after the hermit state launched an intercontinental ballistic missile it boasted could reach the US.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un boasted of his country's ability to strike any target in the US after the ICBM test that weapons experts said could even bring New York into range — in a major challenge to Trump.

"I am very disappointed in China. Our foolish past leaders have allowed them to make hundreds of billions of dollars a year in trade, yet they do nothing for us with North Korea, just talk," Trump wrote.

"We will no longer allow this to continue. China could easily solve this problem!"

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