

## **Cures Vote Expected This Week; GOP Divided On Medicare Reform; ACA Repeal Tactics In Flux**

The Senate is expected to pass 21st Century Cures legislation this week, but Republicans' longer-term legislative strategy is growing difficult to decipher as House Majority Leader Paul Ryan (R-WI) pushes to turn Medicare into a premium support program while many Senate Republicans reportedly don't want to mess with the program. Republicans also are trying to figure out whether they should replace the Affordable Care Act at the same time they repeal it, or repeal it with no firm deadline for replacing the law.

While Democrats are prepared to battle any GOP efforts to reshape Medicare and continue to largely defend the ACA, they worked with Republicans on the Cures bill. The final package includes major reforms to both Medicare and FDA policy.

Despite the overwhelming House-passage of the Cures bill, the prospects of Medicare reform and Obamacare replacement are becoming muddy.

House Speaker Ryan said during a *60 Minutes* interview that Medicare is "an issue we have to tackle," even though analysts and consultants have been saying for weeks that they expect Medicare reform to take a back seat to reforming Medicaid and replacing the Affordable Care Act, and Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-TX) last week told an *Associated Press* reporter that Senate Republicans would rather leave Medicare alone for now.

If Republicans do attempt to turn Medicare into a program that gives seniors government subsidies to buy insurance, there are many details to work out, including how to adjust pay for really sick beneficiaries, how to control for geographic variation and whether to set government subsidies nationally or regionally.