SENATORS TO PRESENT UPDATED ACA STABILIZATION BILLS TO LEADERSHIP IN COMING WEEKS

Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Susan Collins (R-ME), Patty Murray (D-WA) and Bill Nelson (D-FL) have resumed negotiations on their bipartisan bill to stabilize the Obamacare markets and expect to present a final version to leadership in the coming weeks.

The Alexander-Murray bill would fund cost-sharing reduction payments and the Collins-Nelson amendment would provide funding for reinsurance measures. The legislation could help to counter rising health insurance premiums in 2019, which will likely occur due to the GOP tax bill’s repeal of Obamacare’s individual mandate.

Alexander, Collins, Murray and Nelson had put pressure on Congress to pass their stabilization bills by the end of 2017 but now hope lawmakers will pass the legislation before premiums rise in 2019 as a result of the tax law’s individual mandate repeal. None of the senators expect the legislation to be included in the January 19th Continuing Resolution.

When Alexander and Collins present their new legislation to leadership, it is unlikely most Democrats, other than Murray and Nelson, will support it.

An aide to Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) stated that Democrats will not support the Alexander-Murray bill because it does not do enough to mitigate the repeal of the individual mandate, and if Republicans want to pass Alexander-Murray they can do it themselves. The aide also said that the Collins-Nelson amendment would need to be re-examined in the light of individual mandate repeal.