

Trump's move to end insurance subsidies jolts Washington

WASHINGTON — President Trump's decision to abruptly cut off federal payments to insurers reverberated through the political world Saturday, putting pressure on Congress to take action to address the high premiums that American consumers could face and jolting the insurance industry.

Trump's move late Thursday to end federal subsidies that help insurance companies reduce out-of-pocket costs for low- and middle-income consumers also could deepen the divide among Republicans over how to tackle the 2010 Affordable Care Act as the market opens in a little more than two weeks for people to sign up for health insurance.

On Saturday, a broad health industry coalition, which includes health insurance companies, hospitals, the American Medical Association and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, sent a letter to congressional leaders, urging lawmakers to "take action immediately" to revive the payments.

"Millions will face higher premiums, fewer choices and less access to the medical care they need," if Congress fails to restore the funds, the trade groups argued.

The Republican leaders who control Congress have pledged to dismantle the health law, but some in the GOP have balked, unwilling to risk the political fallout in states where large numbers of their constituents are insured through Obamacare.

In a tweet Saturday, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., called Trump's decision an example of his "failure to lead."

The president, he said, "throws destructive bones to his base, then tells Congress to fix it."

Trump's move to cut the payments came on the heels of his Thursday executive order allowing consumers to buy insurance through association health plans across states lines. The move could help millions of consumers find access to cheaper insurance plans, but it could drive them into alternative plans that skirt

the law's consumer protections and minimum coverage requirements.

In a pair of early morning tweets Saturday, Trump celebrated his strikes against President Obama's signature health care law and reveled in the damage it had done to insurance stock prices, which fell sharply Friday on news he was ending the subsidies.

"Health Insurance stocks, which have gone through the roof during the ObamaCare years, plunged yesterday after I ended their Dems windfall!," he wrote in one tweet.

Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/10/14/trump-move-end-insurance-subsidies-jolts-health-industry-washington/764673001/>

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