

Eye on the World

April 1, 2017

This compilation of material for "Eye on the World" is presented as a service to the Churches of God. The views stated in the material are those of the writers or sources quoted by the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of the Church of God Big Sandy. The following articles were posted at churchofgodbigandy.com for the weekend of April 1, 2017.

Compiled by Dave Havir

Luke 21:34-36—"But take heed to yourselves, lest your souls be weighed down with self-indulgence, and drunkenness, or the anxieties of this life, and that day come on you suddenly, like a falling trap; for it will come on all dwellers on the face of the whole earth. But beware of slumbering; and every moment pray that you may be fully strengthened to escape from all these coming evils, and to take your stand in the presence of the Son of Man" (Weymouth New Testament).



A Reuters article titled "Political, Regional Clouds Gather Over Israel Even As Economy Booms" was posted at reuters.com on March 28, 2017. Following is the article.

Israel's politics are darkening: the governing coalition, in power for barely two years, is in tumult and regional tensions are rising.

Looking only at the economy, things seem bright. U.S. chip giant Intel recently bought local start-up Mobileye for \$15 billion, growth is robust and the currency is at record highs.

But beyond the boom, speculation of early elections is rife, friction with Gaza's Hamas rulers is intensifying and Israeli air strikes on Hezbollah fighters in Syria have provoked anti-aircraft missiles in response from Damascus government forces.

To an extent, Israel is always juggling economics and politics. In the past it has sustained growth and foreign investment despite electoral uncertainty and bouts of conflict, whether with Hamas or with Hezbollah on the Shi'ite movement's Lebanese home turf.

The difference now is how rapidly the picture has changed and how close it may be getting to shifting out of control, even if neither Israel nor Hamas nor Hezbollah seeks war.

A month ago, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing coalition appeared solid. Despite being a suspect in two criminal investigations, "Bibi" was set to eclipse David Ben-Gurion's record to become Israel's longest-serving leader.

But in the past few weeks Netanyahu has picked a fight with his finance minister—they disagree over the creation of a new public broadcaster—exposing wider discontent in the coalition and prompting active talk that he might seek an election two years ahead of schedule.

At the same time, tension with Hamas has surged, especially after the assassination of one of its high-profile militants last week, a death blamed on Israel. The air strikes targeting Hezbollah forces fighting in support of the Syrian government prompted Damascus to fire Russian-supplied surface-to-air missiles at Israeli jets, ratcheting up regional anxiety.

Chagai Tzuriel, director general of Israel's ministry of intelligence, said economic hardship in Gaza was fuelling social and political problems and making the situation unpredictable.

"Hamas is the greatest non-state threat in terms of volatility," he said, while describing Hezbollah's military capability—it is estimated to have 100,000 rockets that can target Israel—as more worrying overall.

War in Lebanon?

While the chatter about early elections may be overdone—none of Netanyahu's coalition partners wants new polls and he may be exploiting that concern to keep potential disruptors in line—the regional risks are harder to control.

Hamas appointed a new leader in Gaza last month, Yehya Sinwar, who spent 20 years in an Israeli jail and is close to the movement's military wing. Since then, analysts have worried about the risk of another war after three major conflicts in the territory since Hamas seized power in 2007.

Those fears deepened last Friday when Mazen Fuqaha, a militant released by Israel in a 2011 prisoner swap and exiled to Gaza, was shot and killed, apparently by killers using silencers.

Hamas immediately blamed Israel, despite questions about how it would have carried out the killing and why. An Israeli army spokeswoman declined to comment.

Before Fuqaha's death, Hamas kept tensions in check, making sure its militants tested rockets by firing them into the sea, and tracking down rival groups that fire into Israel. Israel too largely kept to script, retaliating to rockets with air strikes that usually targeted empty Hamas buildings.

That may change, depending on the fallout from Fuqaha.

"If war begins, battles will be tougher with Sinwar at the top," said Gaza political analyst Akram Attalah. "The situation is on the edge of collapse. Hamas and Israel are in a dilemma over how things can proceed."

If Gaza is unpredictable, Hezbollah may be more so.

In 2006, when Israel and Hezbollah last fought a war, the conflict began after shelling over the country's border with Lebanon and an ambush in which Hezbollah militants killed three Israeli soldiers and seized two others. The month-long conflict killed 1,400 people and caused a mass upheaval of populations.

A decade on, with the war in Syria allowing Hezbollah freer rein to encroach toward Israeli-occupied territory on the Golan Heights, the risk of an unforeseen escalation is constant.

Israel has carried out air strikes on Hezbollah units in the area, saying it wants to prevent advanced weaponry from reaching the group, which is backed by Iran. From its side, Hezbollah denounces Israel's actions with strong rhetoric.

Naftali Bennett, a right-wing member of Netanyahu's coalition and a potential challenger, sees another war with Hezbollah as a rising risk, one he hopes can be kept in check by warning Lebanon as a nation to beware.

"The Lebanese institutions, its infrastructure, airport, power stations, traffic junctions, Lebanese army bases—they should all be legitimate targets if a war breaks out," he told Haaretz newspaper this month.

"If we declare and market this message aggressively enough now, we might be able to prevent the next war. After all, we have no intention of attacking Lebanon."



A Reuters article titled "Israel Urges Citizens to Leave Egypt's Sinai, Citing IS Threat" was posted at reuters.com on March 27, 2017. Following is the article.

Israel on Monday urged citizens vacationing in Egypt's Sinai peninsula to leave immediately, saying the threat of attacks inspired by Islamic State and other jihadi groups was high.

The advisory was issued ahead of the Passover holiday, when thousands of Israelis cross the land border with Egypt to visit resorts and beaches on the Sinai's Red Sea coast.

Israel's Anti-Terrorism Directorate said its "Level 1" alert related to a "very high concrete threat."

"Islamic State and those inspired by it are at the forefront of global jihadi groups that are highly motivated to carry out attacks during this period," the directorate wrote.

"All Israelis currently in the Sinai should return and . . . (we) also strongly advise that those wanting to travel to Sinai should not do so."

An Islamist insurgency in the rugged, thinly populated Sinai has gained pace since Egypt's military toppled President Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013.

Militants have launched a number of deadly cross-border attacks on Israel in recent years.

Israel signed a peace treaty with Egypt in 1979. The directorate on Monday refreshed standing warnings for other countries, including Jordan and Turkey.



An article by Melanie Arter titled "Trump Signs Executive Order Rolling Back Obama Environmental Regulations" was posted at cnsnews.com on March 28, 2017. Following is the article.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order on energy Tuesday at the Environmental Protection Agency, undoing "a number" of Obama administration environmental regulations.

"Perhaps no single regulation threatens our miners, energy workers, and companies more than this crushing attack on American industry," Trump said as he signed the executive order.

The order rescinds the Clean Power Plan and lifts a moratorium on new coal leases on federal lands, which the Obama administration had enacted in January 2016. The Obama administration argued at the time that the program needed to be modernized to address climate change.

Twenty-five states and four state agencies challenged Obama's Clean Power Plan in January 2016, calling it "the most far reaching and burdensome rule EPA has ever forced onto the states." They claimed that the Obama administration was trying to shut down all electricity-generating plants that burn coal or oil as fuel in favor of wind and solar power.

"The president strongly believes that protecting the environment and promoting our economy are not mutually exclusive goals. This executive order will help to ensure that we have clean air and clean water without sacrificing economic growth and job creation," White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said.

The executive order "directs all agencies to conduct a review of all regulation, rules, policies, and guidance documents that put up roadblocks to domestic energy production and identify the ones that are not either mandated by law or actually contributing to the public good," Spicer said.

"It also rescinds a number of the previous administration's actions that don't reflect this administration's priorities," he said.

"Next, the order directs the EPA to take several actions to reflect this president's environmental and economic goals, including a review of the new performance standards for coal-fired and natural-gas-fired power plants that amounted to a de facto ban on new coal plant production in the United States," Spicer said.

Spicer called the executive order "great news for states like Wyoming, West Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and others."

"Finally, the order establishes a directive for agencies to use the best available science and economics in their regulatory analysis moving forward," he said, adding that "for too long, the federal government has acted like a barrier to energy independence and innovation."

"By reducing unnecessary regulatory obstacles, we'll free up American energy companies to responsibly use our vast energy resources, protecting the environment while creating well-paying jobs throughout the country," Spicer said.

"American electricity producers have already done an amazing job of adapting and utilizing new technologies to deliver clean power to the United States. Under President Trump, the federal government is going to acknowledge that progress and adjust its policies accordingly," he said.

"That is what this is all about: bringing back our jobs, bringing back our dreams and making America wealthy again," the president said, flanked by coal miners who attended the signing ceremony Tuesday afternoon.



A video and an article by J.J. Gallagher titled "Archdiocese of Mexico Calls Firms Expressing Interest in Trump's Wall 'Traitors' " were posted at yahoo.com on March 27, 2017. Following is the article.

In a withering editorial published on Sunday, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mexico said that Mexican firms interested in helping build President Donald Trump's proposed border wall are "traitors to the homeland."

"It is not two or three, but more than 500 companies," from Mexico expressing interest in Trump's proposed border wall, the editorial says. "For them, the end justifies the means."

Building a wall along the nearly 2,000-mile U.S. border with Mexico was estimated by congressional Republicans to cost \$12 billion to \$15 billion. An internal report prepared for Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly estimat-

ed that a wall along the entire border would cost about \$21 billion, according to the Associated Press.

After repeatedly claiming that Mexico would pay for the wall, President Trump requested \$2.6 billion to start the initial planning and construction in his 2018 budget request. Congress is expected to take up the proposed budget before the end of the fiscal year in September.

The editorial, published in the Archdiocese's weekly publication *Desde la fe*, lambasted the wall as "an open threat that violates relations and peace."

Trump made building a wall on the southwestern border a centerpiece of his 2016 campaign, saying he wants a concrete barrier as high as 55 feet tall that he has described as "impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, beautiful."

The wall has sparked backlash in Mexico, where leaders have spoken out against it publicly. Mexican President Enrique PeÑa Nieto has said his country will not pay for "any" wall on the U.S. border and said he rejects Trump's decision to go ahead with the plan.

Economy Secretary Ildefonso Guajardo warned last week that Mexican citizens would judge companies who choose to participate and base future buying decisions on "which brands are loyal to the national identity, and which are not," according to the Associated Press.

"Joining a project that is a serious affront to dignity, is to shoot yourself in the foot," the Archdiocese editorial reads. "The wall is a monument of intimidation and silence, of xenophobic hatred."

"Any company with the intention to invest in the wall of the fanatic Trump would be immoral, but above all, its shareholders and owners should be considered traitors to the homeland," the editorial concludes.



An article by Tyler Durden titled "WaPo Devastated As Illegal Immigrants Ditch Food Stamps 'So Trump Won't Deport Them' " was posted at zero-hedge.com on March 17, 2017. Following are excerpts of the article.

Caitlin Dewey of the *Washington Post* would like for you to know that she's super sad that "Immigrants are going hungry so Trump won't deport them."

No, that's not the title of a satirical article published on *The Onion*, Caitlin actually published a note describing her complete devastation when she discovered that, under a Trump administration, illegal aliens may unilaterally choose to stop breaking numerous federal laws, including multiple counts of identity theft as that's the only conceivable way an illegal immigrant could get

food stamps in the first place, in order to avoid being punished for other federal laws they've already broken.

Perhaps Caitlin doesn't quite understand how entitlement programs work? You see, Caitlin, despite what you may have been told by Nancy Pelosi or Bernie Sanders, entitlement programs in the U.S. are not funded by the 'entitlement fairy.'

No, in reality, taxpaying citizens (key word there), pay into those programs so that they'll have a safety net to fall back on to the extent they fall on economic hard times. So, hopefully that helps clarify why it might be problematic for people who don't pay taxes in the U.S. to create falsified identities to collect benefits reserved for people who actually paid for them.

Of course, Caitlin, like the majority of the so-called 'progressives' in America, does understand exactly how entitlement programs work but simply feels that American taxpayers somehow have a duty to share their monthly paychecks with the folks who choose to immigrate to this country illegally.

But where does that "spread the wealth around" logic end?

By Caitlin's logic, why should Americans only be required to provide financial assistance to those who have broken the law to get here . . . should they not have to provide similar financial support to anyone around the globe with similar needs?

Perhaps Caitlin is just being 'heartless' by focusing on domestic illegal aliens while ignoring the rest of the world.

According to the Department of Agriculture, 1.5 million noncitizens received food stamps in the 2015 fiscal year, as did 3.9 million citizen children living with noncitizen adults.

For legal immigrants who entered the country after August 1996, eligibility is determined based on their age and time in the U.S.

Adults qualify only after they've lived in the U.S. for five years, or if they're refugees or disabled; children who entered legally qualify sooner. Meanwhile, undocumented immigrants are never eligible for food stamps, though they may live in a "mixed eligibility" household that does receive them.

Of course, we hardly expect logical arguments on the practical limitations of entitlement programs to influence Caitlin's political views on the topic. After all, it's much easier to tell heartbreaking stories than to have practical conversations grounded in facts.

But perhaps the best part of Caitlin's story, buried deep in her article, is her own admission that the whole thing is just another 'fake news' narrative with some quotes from like-minded operatives with a political agenda.

She wrote: "The evidence is still anecdotal—and *The Washington Post* was unable to speak directly with immigrants who chose to cancel their SNAP benefits."



An article titled “ ‘We Welcome Immigrants’: Emanuel Defends Chicago’s Sanctuary Status After Sessions Warns of Funding Cuts” was posted at nbcchicago.com on March 27, 2017. Following is the article.

After Attorney General Jeff Sessions reiterated the federal government’s threat to block funding for so-called “sanctuary cities,” Mayor Rahm Emanuel doubled down on his own promise that Chicago will “continue to welcome” immigrants.

“I’ve always seen Chicago as a welcoming city,” Emanuel said in an interview from the Nasdaq stock exchange in New York on Monday.

“It welcomed my grandfather 100 years ago, we continue to welcome entrepreneurs, immigrants, and I would just say think of it this way: Half the new businesses in Chicago and the state of Illinois come from immigrants, nearly half,” he added. “Half the patents at the University of Illinois come from immigrants, and so we want to continue to welcome people, welcome their ideas, welcome their families to the city of Chicago, who want to build the American dream for their children and their grandchildren.”

Emanuel’s pledge came after Sessions told reporters that the Department of Justice would use compliance with immigration law as a condition for cities to receive federal grants—a reinforcement of the executive order on sanctuary cities that President Donald Trump signed in January.

The term “sanctuary city” refers to jurisdictions that do not comply with federal requests to detain undocumented immigrants who have been arrested on charges unrelated to their immigration status and turn them over to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement for possible deportation.

In a surprise appearance at the White House press briefing Monday, Sessions said that these policies are “designed to frustrate the enforcement of our immigration laws.”

“They make our nation less safe by putting dangerous criminals back on our streets,” Sessions said. “We intend to use every lawful authority we have to make sure our state and local officials, who are so important to law enforcement, are in sync with the federal government.”

Chicago receives more than \$1 billion in federal funding for initiatives including transportation, housing, public health and law enforcement—an area in which Emanuel has repeatedly asked for more assistance in combatting the city’s violence. On Monday, however, Emanuel appeared more concerned about maintaining Chicago’s status as a sanctuary city than he was about losing resources.

“Chicago was built on the back of immigrants and our future is hitched to the wagon of immigrants who come to the city,” he said. “I would say that the

approach of penalizing cities, cities that are driving the economy, driving the energy of the United States—and they do it because we bring people of all different backgrounds to work together—that’s just the wrong approach.”

This is not the first time Emanuel has spoken out against the order, reaffirming that Chicago will remain a sanctuary city immediately after Trump signed the executive action in January, and joining a coalition of 34 cities and counties across the country on Thursday in asking a federal court to halt that order.

“Chicago has always been a welcoming city—its history is that of people, whether they’re from Poland or Pakistan, whether they’re from Ireland or India, whether they’re from Mexico or Moldova like where my grandfather came—we welcome immigrants who believe in America, believe in the American dream and want their children to do better than they do right now,” Emanuel added.

Chicago is not alone in its immigration policies, as more than 200 jurisdictions nationwide have declared sanctuary status, including New York City, Los Angeles and more.



An article titled “NYC Vows to Fight for Sanctuary Status” was posted at fox5ny.com on March 27, 2017. Following is the article.

Municipal leaders nationwide vowed to defy any crackdown on sanctuary cities after a warning from Attorney General Jeff Sessions that they could lose federal money for refusing to cooperate with immigration authorities and suggested the government would come after grand money that has already been awarded if they don’t comply.

“We are going to become this administration’s worst nightmare,” said New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, who was among officials gathered in New York for a small conference that attracted officials from cities including San Francisco, Seattle, Denver, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York.

Mark-Viverito and others promised to block federal immigration agents from accessing certain private areas on city property, to restrict their access to schools and school records and to offer legal services to immigrants in the country illegally.

U.S. Attorney General Jefferson B. Sessions III (White House)

NYC vows to fight for sanctuary status

California Senate leader Kevin de León called Sessions’ message, “nothing short of blackmail . . . Their gun-to-the-head method to force resistant cities and counties to participate in Trump’s inhumane and counterproductive mass-deportation is unconstitutional and will fail.”

Sessions said the Justice Department would require cities seeking some of \$4.1 billion available in grant money to verify that they are in compliance with a section of federal law that allows information sharing with immigration officials.

His statements in the White House briefing room brought to mind tough talk from President Donald Trump's campaign and came just three days after the administration's crushing health care defeat. Sessions also acknowledged he was clarifying a similar policy adopted by the Obama administration last year.

"I urge the nation's states and cities to carefully consider the harm they are doing to their citizens by refusing to enforce our immigration laws," Sessions said.

Trump had said during the campaign that he would "defund" sanctuary cities by taking away their federal funding. But legal precedent suggests that would be difficult.

Sessions' message came days after the administration released a report on local jails that listed more than 200 cases of immigrants released from custody before federal agents could intervene. That list was compiled following an executive order Trump signed in January that called on the government to document which local jurisdictions aren't cooperating with federal efforts to find and deport immigrants in the country illegally.



An article by Elizabeth Chou titled "LA Mayor Vows to Fight Trump Administration Attempt to Strip 'Sanctuary City' Funding" was posted at dailynews.com on March 27, 2017. Following is the article.

Responding to the latest warnings by U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions that Department of Justice funds will be withheld from sanctuary cities, Mayor Eric Garcetti said Monday he will fight efforts by the Trump administration to take away federal funding needed for law enforcement in Los Angeles.

Garcetti said that such actions would be unconstitutional, adding that the city's policies are "designed to keep our residents safe."

"Slashing funds for first-responders, for our port and airport, for counterterrorism, crime-fighting and community-building serves no one—not this city, not the federal government, not the American people," he said. "We will fight to protect the safety and dignity of all Angelenos, and we will work closely with our representatives in Congress to make sure that Los Angeles does not go without federal resources that help protect millions of people every day."

Among the Justice Department grants received by the city of Los Angeles in recent years include \$1.8 million from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program, which goes to the city's initiative for reducing criminal gang activity.

The city also was awarded \$1 million last year from the Justice Department to be put toward a \$69 million program to equip all police officers in the field with body cameras.

It was not immediately clear how much funding could be at risk if Los Angeles were deemed a sanctuary city.

Sessions said local jurisdictions seeking U.S. Department of Justice grants must first demonstrate they are not sanctuary cities, by proving they are in compliance with Section 1373 of U.S. Code Title 8, which requires notification of federal officials about the immigration status of people in local custody. The policy was issued under the Barack Obama administration in 2016.

"I urge the nation's states and cities to carefully consider the harm they are doing to their citizens by refusing to enforce our immigration laws," Sessions said in statements from the White House briefing room.

Trump said during the campaign that he would "defund" sanctuary cities by taking away their federal funding. But legal precedent suggests that would be difficult.

Sessions' warning comes on the heels of a Trump administration report on local jails, listing more than 200 cases across the country in which immigrants were released from custody before federal agents could intervene.

Los Angeles-area jails, including one in Van Nuys, made the federal government's list.

Garcetti does not refer to Los Angeles as a "sanctuary city" and said in January that it is a "myth" that we don't collaborate or cooperate with federal officials.

Los Angeles operates under Special Order 40, which prohibits police officers from approaching individuals to ask about immigration status or arresting people for immigration-related violations. But the policy also requires police officials to inform federal immigration officials of any "undocumented alien" who is arrested for multiple misdemeanor violations, high-level misdemeanor or felony offense violations or for a repeat offense.

At the county level, the L.A. County Sheriff's Department responds to requests from federal immigration agents to be notified when its jails are housing inmates who might be subject to deportation.

Sheriff Jim McDonnell said the department's current practice is to release inmates being investigated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement directly into the custody of their agents.

Garcetti said in January that he feels the city of L.A. has a strong legal case for keeping its federal funding, saying that the city is protected by the 10th Amendment, which lays out states' rights.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that under the 10th Amendment, certain provisions in the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, that mandated what states needed to do to obtain federal funding, needed to be thrown out.

“We are absolutely prepared in the courts—together with the other cities and states—to reaffirm what the Supreme Court literally just decided last year on the 10th Amendment,” he said.

“You can take away funding for a specific program if you don’t adhere to specific requirements of that program, but we don’t have funding that is for the cooperation of our immigration federal officials and our local officials,” he said.



An article by Philip Klein titled “GOP Cave on Obamacare Repeal is the Biggest Broken Promise in Political History” was posted at washingtonexaminer.com on March 24, 2017. Following are excerpts of the article.

Broken promises are as old as politics itself, and there are many famous examples of them in modern history. President George H.W. Bush’s “read my lips, no new taxes” pledge comes immediately to mind, as does President Bill Clinton reneging on his middle-class tax cut, and President Barack Obama never closing Guantanamo Bay.

But in each of those cases, those were promises that were made in a given campaign by a given politician. The promise of Obamacare repeal is much different.

Republicans ran on repealing and replacing Obamacare for seven years, over the course of four election cycles.

They won the House majority in 2010 in large part because of the backlash against the passage of Obamacare—and the vow to “repeal and replace” Obamacare was part of their “Pledge to America” campaign document that year.

The botched rollout of Obamacare helped them win the Senate in 2014. House candidates, Senate candidates, gubernatorial candidates, and even state legislative candidates ran against Obamacare—and won.

Though President Trump was always an unorthodox candidate on healthcare (vacillating between praising single-payer and touting a free market plan), he consistently campaigned on repealing and replacing Obamacare, and exploited news of spiking premiums in the weeks leading up to the presidential election.

Republicans were always moving the goal posts on voters. That is, during campaign season, they made boasts about repeal, and then once in office, they talked about procedural complications.

In 2010, they campaigned on repeal, but by 2011, they said they needed the Senate. In 2014, they won the Senate, but by 2015 they said as long as Obama was in office, nothing would become law.

In 2016, they told conservative voters, even reluctant ones, that if they voted for Trump despite any reservations, they'd finally be able to repeal Obamacare.

In November, voters gave them unified control of Washington. And yet after just two months on the job, they have thrown in the towel and said they're willing to abandon seven years of promises.

There are a lot of people who want to conveniently lay the blame for this stunning failure on recalcitrant members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus. If only these conservative hardliners were willing to give way, we'd be on the road to repeal, defenders of leadership would like to have us believe.

This is convenient, both because there are always people in Washington eager to take aim at conservative purists, and also because it has the makings of a great ironic hot take for journalists: "How conservatives saved Obamacare."

Now, let me be clear, in past fights, I've never been reluctant to criticize hardliners when I thought that they were being unreasonable or irresponsible. For instance, I disagreed with the hard-line position on the debt ceiling, didn't think forcing a government shutdown to defund Obamacare would work, and supported the deal that made most of the Bush tax cuts permanent (as opposed to letting them all expire).

But I don't think it's fair to scapegoat Freedom Caucusers here. They are being blamed for making the naive mistake of assuming that Republicans wanted to do what they were promising to do for seven years.

In this case, the hardliners were playing a productive role by pointing out the real policy consequences of the piecemeal approach being pursued by the House leadership. Though we'll never know for sure how the numbers might have looked if a vote had taken place, it's clear that many centrist members of the Republican caucus were also prepared to vote this bill down.

House conservatives, if they could be blamed for anything, it's for having the audacity to urge leadership to actually honor seven years of pledges to voters to repeal Obamacare. If anybody was moving the goal posts, it wasn't Freedom Caucusers, it was those who were trying to sell a bill that kept much of Obamacare's regulatory architecture in place as a free market repeal and replace plan.

Trump did not win the Republican nomination telling rallies of thousands of people, "We're going to repeal and replace Obamacare—as long as it satisfies the Byrd rule in the judgment of the Senate parliamentarian!"

What's so utterly disgraceful, is not just that Republicans failed so miserably, but that they barely tried, raising questions about whether they ever actually wanted to repeal Obamacare in the first place.

Republicans for years have criticized the process that produced Obamacare, and things certainly got ugly. But after having just witnessed this debacle, I think Paul Ryan owes Nancy Pelosi an apology.

The contrast between Obama and Democrats on healthcare and what just happened is stunning. House Republicans slapped together a bill in a few weeks (months if we're being generous) behind closed doors with barely any debate.

They moved the bill through committees at blazing speed, conducted closed-door negotiations that resulted in relatively minor tweaks to the bill, and within 17 days, Trump decided that he'd had enough, and was ready to walk away if members didn't accept the bill as is.

It reminded me of the scene in "Duck Soup," in which Groucho Marx portrays Rufus T. Firefly, leader of the fictional Freedonia. Firefly conducts a cabinet meeting that he starts by saying he'll take up old business. One official says, "I wish to discuss the tariff." Firefly responds, "Sit down, that's new business."

When nobody has any old business to discuss he decides to turn to new business. "About that tariff—" the same official interjects. "Too late," Firefly responds, "That's old business already."

This is not too far off from the process we just witnessed. Healthcare is incredibly complicated stuff, with each provision of legislation being interconnected with others. It can't be negotiated like a spending bill in which two people have a different spending target, and somehow you manage to split the difference.

We know what the market is like under Obamacare and have a decent idea of what it would be like if it were repealed. But the random, piecemeal combination of changes being made to win over votes, presents everybody with completely new policy challenges that experts were scrambling to assess in real time, yet lawmakers were being asked to vote on them within hours of being adopted. And House Freedom Caucus members are the ones who don't understand how serious governing works? Give me a break.

Here's the bottom line: Republicans didn't want to repeal Obamacare that badly.

Obamacare was a useful tool for them. For years, they could use it to score short-term messaging victories.

- People are steamed about high premiums? We'll message on that today.
- People are angry about losing insurance coverage? We'll put out a devastating YouTube video about that.
- Seniors are angry about the Medicare cuts? Let's tweet about it.
- High deductibles are unpopular? We'll issue an email fact sheet. Or maybe a gif.

At no point were they willing to do the hard work of hashing out their intra-party policy differences and developing a coherent health agenda or of challenging the central liberal case for universal coverage.

Sure, if the U.S. Supreme Court did the job for them, they were okay with Obamacare going away. But when push came to shove, they weren't willing to put in the elbow grease.

There was a big debate over the course of the election about how out of step Trump was with the Republican Party on many issues. But if anything, this episode shows that Trump and the GOP are perfect together—limited in attention span, all about big talk and identity politics, but uninterested in substance.

Failing to get the votes on one particular bill is one thing. But failing and then walking away on seven years of promises is a pathetic abdication of duty. The Republican Party is a party without a purpose.



An article by Twila Brase titled “Failed GOP Health Care Bill Wouldn’t Have Repealed, Or Even Replaced Obamacare” was posted at cnsnews.com on March 28, 2017. Following is the article.

Late Friday [March 24] afternoon, Congress pulled the American Health Care Act (AHCA), just minutes before a scheduled vote. And over the weekend, many were asking, “What went wrong?”

After seven years of Obamacare, big hospitals have gobbled up little hospitals and big insurers have gobbled up smaller insurers, causing higher prices, higher premiums and higher deductibles. The power of health plans, exerted in politics at the national and state level, has also vastly expanded, and now, many Americans have health care premiums that are higher than their mortgage payments. And to add insult to injury, they’ve lost their doctors and lost their plans.

Republicans won a huge number of votes based on the promise that they would repeal Obamacare, but the bill pulled from the House on Friday didn’t deliver the promised repeal. In fact, the bill didn’t even replace Obamacare.

Instead, the American Health Care Act continued government-run health care with its own requirements and mandates. Nothing in the law would have guaranteed lower prices or increased access to health care.

As for what went wrong, conservatives were never really welcomed to the table and included in important policy discussions. Now, President Trump must make a decisive decision that the country will march back to freedom in health care rather than advancing toward socialized medicine under corporate cover.

Last week in advance of the scheduled AHCA vote, I met with lawmakers about the GOP plan as well as other important health care issues. CCHF prepared a document for members of Congress that outlined what the health freedom organization wants to see as health care reform moves forward.

In a featured video with *The Daily Caller*, I also discusses CCHF’s newest initiative, The Wedge of Health Freedom (www.JointheWedge.com) to transform the entire health care system back to freedom and restore simplicity, afford-

ability and confidentiality. Nearly 200 Wedge practices, where patients can find affordable, patient-centered care, are located in 44 states and listed online.



Isaiah 55:6-11—“Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”