

“No cuts to Medicaid!”: protesters in wheelchairs arrested after release of health care bill

Disability rights activists turn up the heat outside Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s office.

Updated by Jeff Stein | Jun 22, 2017, 2:40pm EDT

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Capitol Police remove a woman from a protest in front of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s office | Photo by Mark Wilson/Getty Images

About 50 disabled people, many in wheelchairs, were arrested at Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s office in the Capitol on Thursday for protesting Republicans’ health care bill, according to a spokesperson with a disability rights group.

The members of ADAPT, a disability rights group, are now being held by Capitol Police after staging a protest to decry the Medicaid overhaul proposed in the bill made public by McConnell on Thursday.

Video captured by Mic’s Will Drabold and other reporters shows protesters screaming, “No cuts to Medicaid!” as they were dragged out by Capitol Police. Capitol Police did not immediately confirm a report of the number of arrests.

The Senate’s proposed health care bill not only rolls back the Medicaid expansion in place under Obamacare but also **makes deep cuts to the original program** — all while enacting huge tax cuts for the wealthy.

Will Drabold @WillDrabold 22 Jun
This man is blind. pic.twitter.com/NpJwJveaNU

Will Drabold @WillDrabold
More screaming “no cuts to Medicaid!”
pic.twitter.com/atZXYOIGS
11:45 AM - 22 Jun 2017

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Protesters chanting “no cuts to Medicaid” outside McConnell’s office. Capitol Police blocked the hallway & protesters are being removed
10:51 AM - 22 Jun 2017 - Washington, DC

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“The government wants to kill me,” this protester said as she was removed from the protest area
10:46 AM - 22 Jun 2017 - Washington, DC

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The demonstration is just one part of the left’s game plan to try to sink the health bill by bringing as much possible attention to it as they can.

David M. Perry, a freelance journalist who has covered disability issues and activism, said Thursday’s demonstration is just the tip of iceberg in terms of the activism to expect from people with disabilities. “These are issues of life and death. Freedom or incarceration. And disabilities advocates are rising to the challenge,” he said.

“Activists are doing everything they can possibly think of to show how scared and concerned they are,” said Claire McAndrew, campaign director with Families USA.

Eric Von Schmetterling, 65, of Philadelphia, came to Washington with ADAPT but did not get arrested. He said members of the organization came from as far away as New York, Texas, and Colorado to join the demonstration.

“Trump doesn’t know our rights or care,” Von Schmetterling said. “But when you’re disabled, your medical care is important, and you have to fight for it.”

Additional reporting from Liz Plank.

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