



E.A. Crunden

Reporter, Texpat. Nose up in the globes, writing on everything. She/her, they/them, or no pronouns. Say hi... Jun 22 · 3 min read

Wheelchair users dragged away from McConnell's office for protesting health care bill

Dozens of disability rights activists were arrested.



Stephanie Woodward, of Rochester, NY, who has spina bifida and uses a wheelchair, is removed from a sit-in at Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office as she and other disability rights advocates protest proposed funding cuts to Medicaid, Thursday, June 22, 2017, on Capitol Hill in Washington. CREDIT: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

Activists in wheelchairs protesting the Senate's newly-released health care bill were arrested and dragged from outside Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office on Thursday.

The incident occurred after about 60 members of ADAPT, a U.S. disability rights organization with fierce objections to the American Health Care Act (AHCA), staged a "die-in" outside of the Kentucky senator's office.

The AHCA would cap and cut Medicaid, something that would have severe repercussions for Americans with disabilities. Many people living with disabilities rely on Medicaid for their basic care and survival. A press release circulated by ADAPT stated that the intent of the protest was to "dramatize the deaths" the AHCA would cause in this community if implemented.

"To say people will die under this law is not an exaggeration," Mike Oxford, an ADAPT organizer from Kansas, said prior to the protest. "Home and community based services are what allow us to do our jobs, live our lives and raise our families. Without these services many disabled and elderly Americans will die. We won't let that happen."

Initially, the demonstration was a relatively peaceful show of dissent, as a large number of protesters gathered outside of McConnell's office to voice their anger, with some yelling, "I'd rather go to jail than die without Medicaid!" (McConnell was not in his office at the time of the protest, as he was introducing the health bill, while arguing it would "strengthen Medicaid.")



Mariam Khan @MKhan47
Huge protest inside and outside of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office happening right now.
10:24 AM - 22 Jun 2017
4,868 retweets 8,309 likes



NationalADAPT @NationalADAPT
We are at @SenateMajLdr demanding he stop the attacks on Disabled people's freedom with #AHCA. #ADAPTandRESIST #NoC... pscp.tv/w/bBqEzDFxTFFH...
10:14 AM - 22 Jun 2017
1,932 retweets 2,409 likes

But the situation appeared to deteriorate as police attempted to remove protesters. ADAPT's D.C. area branch tweeted that officers were picking people up and dropping them, which video footage of the incident appears to corroborate. Several onlookers also reported seeing blood on the floor as activists were hauled away by police.

DC Metro ADAPT @DCAdapt
EMTs coming through, we're hearing rumors that police are picking people up and dropping them. #ADAPTandRESIST #SaveMedicaid
11:01 AM - 22 Jun 2017
53 retweets 20 likes



Mariam Khan @MKhan47
Blood on the floor outside of Leader McConnell's office as protesters are physically being removed.
10:36 AM - 22 Jun 2017
2,679 retweets 1,793 likes



Jeff Stein @JStein_Vox
Eric got up at 6am to board a train from Philly, watched dozens of his friends get arrested (many in wheelchairs or w/ respirators)
12:57 PM - 22 Jun 2017
242 retweets 406 likes

ADAPT confirmed that 50 protesters with disabilities were arrested during the incident and are still being held in custody. Disability rights journalist David M. Perry also tweeted that Bruce Darling, CEO for the Center for Disability Rights, was seemingly being held separately from other protesters:

David M. Perry @Lollardfish
I just spoke to some ADAPTers in custody. @ADAPTterBruce is being held separately. No one has seen him since he was arrested. [twitter.com/Lollardfish/st...](https://twitter.com/Lollardfish/status/874111111)
1:11 PM - 22 Jun 2017
23 retweets 9 likes

One ADAPT member said that police were responsible for the violent nature of the arrests, but that the organization's demonstration was in keeping with the severity of the threat the AHCA poses to people with disabilities.

"The nature of the arrests were up to the officers," ADAPT member Kings Floyd told ThinkProgress in an email. "We did not assist the officers in our arrest nor did we actively resist. The nature of the Trumpcare bill calls for a nonviolent but passionate demonstration, as our lives are at risk. We know with the proposed cuts to Medicaid people with disabilities will die. This means we will continue to fight for our lives and continue to be arrested as the police deem necessary."

ADAPT has long been vocal in its rejection of any proposed cuts to Medicaid. In March, a protest of around 40 people, the majority of them in wheelchairs, shut down the Capitol Rotunda for around an hour while demonstrators railed against the AHCA.

Disability Health Ahca Health Care

36 retweets 14 comments



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