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Trumpcare Protester: Republicans 'Would Rather Arrest People With Disabilities Than Take Care Of Us'

Prachi Gupta 6/22/17 3:30pm • Filed to: TRUMPCARE 18.3K 294 41



On Thursday morning, dozens of disabled rights protesters gained national attention when they staged a sit-in at Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office, chanting, "No cuts to Medicaid—save our liberty!" Shocking images and video of Capitol Hill Police removing men and women from wheelchairs and dragging them out of the building quickly spread on social media.

They were protesting the Senate's draft of the Obamacare repeal and replacement bill, which McConnell unveiled this morning after weeks of secrecy. The bill slashes Medicaid funding and phases out the program by 2020, strips essential health benefits like maternity care and prescription drugs, and offers tax cuts to the wealthy. Republicans aim to circumvent a committee hearing and vote by bringing the bill directly to the floor before July 4.

The "die in" was organized by grassroots disability advocacy organization ADAPT, which engages in nonviolent civil disobedience to call attention to the civil rights of the disabled community across the country. A press release announcing the protest notes that the event takes place on the 18th anniversary of *Olmstead v. LC*, a landmark civil rights ruling which recognized a right for disabled individuals to live in communities over institutions.



Jezebel spoke with ADAPT organizer Stephanie Woodward while she was in police custody waiting to be processed. Police removed Woodward from her wheelchair and physically carried her out of the building. "I was on the ground in the office and then they put me in my wheelchair and then [I was] taken out of it and they carried me out," she said.

She said that police had separated the wheelchair users from the non-wheelchair users. "We're very concerned about the way they're processing us, by separating people with physical disabilities from people without. I know that there's a good 25 in this room with all the wheelchair users." She estimates that "a large majority" of the around 60 protesters were arrested. Police did not immediately respond to an email requesting confirmation regarding the total number of arrests or the details regarding processing.

"We are significantly concerned with the cuts that have been proposed for Medicaid that will result in the deaths of people with disabilities," she said. "People will die because of this and we're not willing to just sit around and wait for that."

Woodward has had spina bifida since birth. "The only way to get me the healthcare I needed was for me to be on Medicaid. I was on Medicaid until I was 25 and I graduated from law school. So I depended on Medicaid for my life," she said.

Here is security dragging a protester outside of Mitch McConnell's office. FFS. [#HealthcareBill](#) [pic.twitter.com/OK7NB4sYUJ](#)

— Erick Fernandez (@ErickFernandez) June 22, 2017

"I've had so many surgeries, kidney infections that have gotten very significant, I've had surgeries on my spine, my legs, my hip, and none of this would have been possible without Medicaid and so while I don't depend on it right now, there are millions who do and there are millions of people who are just like me, but just don't happen to be lawyers. I don't think that your level of education should determine the amount of healthcare that you receive."

"It feels like the Republicans are turning their backs on us. We've been trying to have meetings. We came to talk to them face-to-face today, and they continue to turn their backs on the disability community," she continued. She remained undeterred. "It's worth it to me. I'll do whatever I need to do. But it shocked me that our senators would rather arrest people with disabilities than take care of us."



Update 6/22, 3:39 pm: Eva Malecki, Communications Director with the United States Capitol Police, released the following statement to Jezebel via email:

Today, at approximately at 11:30 a.m., disability rights activists staged a planned "die-in" in the Russell Senate Office Building. Many of the demonstrators, as part of their protest activities, removed themselves from their wheelchairs and lay themselves on the floor, obstructing passage through the hallway and into nearby offices.

U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) officers warned the demonstrators to cease their unlawful activities or be faced with arrest. Forty-three people (15 males and 28 females) did not cease their demonstration activities and were arrested.

The arrestees were charged with D.C. Code §22-1307, Crowding, Obstructing, or Incommoding. They were transported to USCP Headquarters for processing.

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JuJyMonkey > Prachi Gupta 6/22/17 3:48pm
 The optics of pulling people from their wheelchairs is simply staggering in its awfulness. Yet Trump supporters (who will undoubtedly be affected in large numbers) will put on their stupid MAGA hats and cheer Donnie on, while he simultaneously pushes their heads deeper into a shit-filled trench.

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hockygrrl4 is a secret mermaid > Prachi Gupta 6/22/17 4:54pm
 I was in a local dollar store in a small town in a cranby state. This particular town is