

Cornyn, GOP eye Medicaid reform

By Robert King , Ben Leonard

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Republicans in Congress are eyeing major changes to Medicaid, the government insurance program for low income people, as they prepare to take control of Washington.

Sen. [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas) said that while Social Security and Medicare cuts are likely off the table, Medicaid could be ripe for reform. Specifically, Cornyn teased the idea of providing states a lump sum to cover medical expenses — known as a block grant — rather than having the program be an open-ended entitlement.

“We can’t just keep doing things the way we’ve been doing them,” Cornyn said. “I’m not advocating for Social Security or Medicare in the absence of a bipartisan consensus because we know that will be a futile effort. There’s a lot of other spending we should consider ... We ought to look at whether we’re doing [Medicaid] the right way. Block grants make a lot of sense.”

Rep. [Greg Murphy](#) (R-N.C.), a member of the GOP Doctors Caucus who sits on the Ways and Means Committee, also said Congress needs to consider block grants.

“I think that is a reasonable thing to do,” he said.

Republicans would almost certainly need to rely on a budget reconciliation package next year — which would allow them to pass a sweeping package with simple majorities in both chambers — to make substantial cuts to Medicaid. And many Republicans might be looking for ways to help pay for an extension of the Trump tax cuts which are due to expire in 2025.

Still, not all Republicans were jumping on board. Rep. [Brett Guthrie](#) (R-Ky.), who is running to helm the Energy and Commerce Committee, said he has not heard of Medicaid cuts as of now.

Rep. [Buddy Carter](#) (R-Ga.), who is seeking to run the Energy & Commerce Committee’s Health Subcommittee said, “Everything is on the table.”

Democrats would be loath to get on board with such a move and insist Republicans will regret trying.

“That’s a tough one for them to sell, particularly if you’re cutting money for low-income people while simultaneously giving tax cuts to people at the top,” said Rep. [Richard Neal](#) (D-Mass.), the ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee.