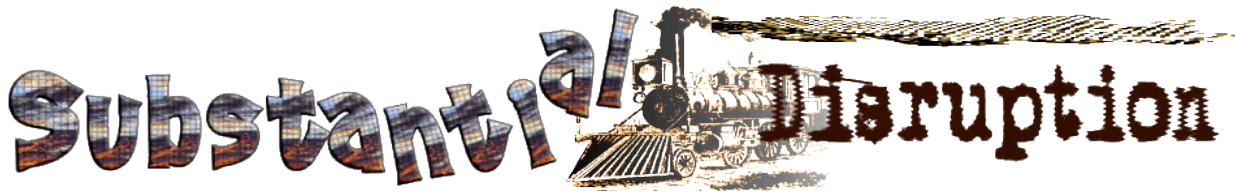


Substantial Disruption



Let's Get This (Deleted) Thing Done

By Mike Tully

Arizona Congresswoman Martha McSally has jeopardized her political future by violating the trilogy of governance that applies to elected representatives:

1. First do no harm. This phrase, a fundamental principle that guides medical ethics, is based on the words of [Hippocrates](#), who is regarded as the "[father of modern medicine](#)." The same principal should guide Congress.
2. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. The novelist [George Santayana's](#) quote is one of the most profound, widely repeated, and frequently ignored statements in human experience. It applies equally to history and politics.
3. You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. This [Bob Dylan lyric](#) is directly applicable to Congress, home to many notorious weathervanes.

McSally violated all three principles by voting for [H.R.1628, the American Health Care Act of 2017](#) (AHCA), Congressional Republicans' long-awaited replacement for the Affordable Care Act (ACA). She was a ramrod, channeling her inner Joe Biden and telling fellow GOP members, "[Let's get this f--ing thing done!](#)" The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had not scored the bill for its impact on citizens and the federal budget, but House Republicans, led by McSally's spirited exhortation, passed it while ignorant of its consequences. The bill's provisions are set forth in the Act's summary and a [Kaiser Family Health Foundation analysis](#).

Supporters claim the Act will be an improvement over the ACA, with lower premiums and more choices – but it violates the "do no harm" rule. The CBO [scored](#) the original version of the bill and determined that 24 million Americans would lose health coverage, more than half of them in 2018. The modified version McSally and her cohort passed is not really a health care bill. It's a [tax cut for the wealthy](#), financed by cutting benefits for the poor, sick, and disabled, the kind of provision former Labor Secretary Robert Reich refers to as "[Robin Hood in rewind](#)." It eliminates cost-sharing subsidies (§131). It slashes Medicaid funding (§§ 111,112), which will hurt, among others, [children eligible for Special Education](#) services and, in a slap to the face of McSally's female constituents, eliminates funding for Planned Parenthood (§§ 103,202). It [allows restoration of lifetime limits](#) on coverage for employer-based plans, putting employees and their families at risk of financial calamity. The Act allows states to [eliminate](#) the 10 "essential benefits" that insurance plans must cover, encouraging employers to lobby state legislatures to allow replacement of current insurance plans with cheaper ones that don't cover [essential services](#) for hospitals, emergency rooms, child birth, prescription drugs and substance abuse. It allows insurers to [eliminate guaranteed coverage of pre-existing conditions](#), one of the most popular provisions of the ACA. Except for the Medicaid cuts, the Act does not make these changes itself; it leaves most to the states. That's a cowardly provision that sets up local politicians to take the fall for what Congress did.

The voters will not be fooled, which brings us to Santayana's admonition. "Once something is given," writes [conservative commentator Charles Krauthammer](#), "you take it away at your peril." "This is true for any government benefit, but especially for health care," he added. "There's a reason not one Western democracy

with some system of national health care has ever abolished it.” While the benefits of the ACA were hypothetical when it was being debated, they no longer are. People have seen the results, and they approve. The ACA is now [more popular](#) than the Republicans who want to eliminate it. Many of McSally’s constituents [directly benefit](#) from the ACA: More than 19,000 participate in an exchange and 28,507 gained coverage when the ACA expanded Medicaid. Those who do not directly benefit but are covered by employer health plans will also be affected, since it is likely that Arizona’s Republican-controlled legislature will exploit the Act’s option to remove essential benefits. The [Center for America Progress](#) estimates that more than 40,000 of McSally’s constituents will [lose health insurance coverage by 2026](#) if the Act becomes law, including 13,300 with employer-based plans. Others will retain their employer-based plans, but they will not enjoy the protections currently guaranteed by the ACA.

Finally, there is the Dylan observation. Which way is the wind blowing? Tennessee Representative Marsha Blackburn stuck her finger into the wind earlier this year by publishing a [Twitter poll](#) to see how many voters wanted to get rid of the ACA. The results were not close: 86 percent voted to keep it. That’s a powerful gale.

Why is Martha McSally flirting with political suicide? Perhaps her ambition transcends the dusty confines of Arizona’s 2nd Congressional district. She has already been characterized as a “[rising star](#)” within the Republican Party; there was even speculation that she could wind up on the [national ticket](#). It’s hard to focus on the needs of Bisbee and Benson when your gaze is fixed on the [U. S. Naval Observatory](#).

McSally was the first woman to [fly a combat aircraft into enemy territory](#). Our military personnel defend the *United States*, every American, rich or poor, healthy or infirm, regardless of status. If McSally has forgotten that and decides to cabin her loyalty to those who can serve her political ambitions, voters will see through it and send her packing as quickly as you can say: “Let’s get this f—ing thing done!”