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White House plans to release health bill and backs reconciliation

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A senior White House official said the Trump administration intends to put forward a health bill and left open the possibility of using the fast-track legislative process of reconciliation for passage of health or tariff legislation.

“We're going to have the health care conversation. We're going to put some legislation forward,” White House deputy chief of staff James Blair said Tuesday at a Bloomberg Government policy breakfast.

He expressed interest in a bipartisan health plan but said that “if that path is foreclosed, there is the partisan path of reconciliation as well.”

Such a move would allow Republicans to advance a health plan with a simple majority, a path they unsuccessfully attempted in Trump's first term to repeal Obamacare but successfully used earlier this year on the megabill.

“The president probably would like to go bigger than the Hill has the appetite for, so we'll have to see how that, you know, works out,” Blair added, hinting at potential friction between the White House and congressional Republicans.

Several GOP lawmakers have said privately that they expect the White House to put forward a framework that revisits long-standing Republican goals — including reducing insurance costs, expanding health savings accounts and unwinding parts of the Affordable Care Act — though it remains unclear how sweeping Trump hopes to go.

If a reconciliation bill moves soon, Blair indicated that the administration would also want to include "probably the Trump tariff dividends and … interest in locking in tariffs."

Senate Republicans have been privately discussing a second reconciliation package. Budget Committee Republicans are tentatively looking at early next year for finalizing a budget resolution that would tee up the party-line package, according to senators on the committee.

Senate Budget Chair Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) previously told POLITICO that the party could use a second bill to tackle health care, spending and tax policy.

But there's plenty of skepticism, including within top members of the House and Senate GOP conferences, about doing another party-line bill, which would require near unity from their thin majorities. GOP senators, in a recent closed-door lunch, noted that many of their health care ideas left out of the “big, beautiful bill” wouldn't comply with the Senate's strict rules for what can be included under reconciliation, according to one attendee granted anonymity to disclose private discussions.