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Indivisible movement volunteers hold rally in favor of the Affordable Care Act on March 25

by [VERA WESTBROOK](#) *The News-Review*. Roseburg

WINCHESTER — A rally organized by Indivisible Roseburg held in front of Umpqua Community College in support of the Affordable Care Act saw ample support Saturday morning.

About 30 individuals held signs and chanted prior to marching to Sen. Jeff Merkley's town-hall meeting held in the college gymnasium later that morning.

"Our goal is to make sure our country doesn't diverge into unnecessary division, hate and issues that are not productive to our people," said Indivisible Roseburg volunteer George Roth.

Part of a new national movement, Indivisible Roseburg is a group of about 200 citizens whose mission is to stand up against and resist the agenda of President Donald Trump and his supporters, who undermine immigration, health care, women's issues, environmental protections and basic rights.

"We believe the only way to affect any change is to influence our senators and our representatives to make sure they understand the opinions and wishes of their constituents, so we bother them to death," Roth said.

The group sends its message through activities like phone calls, post cards, emails, visits, rallies and marches.

Although Congress did not successfully repeal and replace the ACA as of Thursday and Friday of last week, Indivisible Roseburg still held the rally to bring awareness to the issues compromised by the Trump administration.

"We need to stand up for the rights of individuals who collectively can't speak well for themselves, and our group is interested in doing that," Roth said.

Since the Tuesday after Trump was elected, this group meets every week and visits Eugene, Congressman Peter DeFazio's office and Sen. Jeff Merkley's office. They also organized a health care march in late February in Roseburg.

"We are holding a rally today to make sure that Sen. Merkley understands our concerns," Roth said. "The Affordable Care Act is not perfect, but it's better than what (Republicans') proposed."

While marching and chanting "The ACA is here to stay" and holding signs that read "Resist Republicare" on the way from the UCC fountain in front of the college to the gymnasium, Merkley met up with the group.

"Thank you so much for your grassroots activism," Merkley said. "What happened on Thursday and Friday was a response to the thousands of people calling up their legislators, protesting in the street, sending emails, sending letters and saying that destroying health care for 20 million Americans is unacceptable."

Merkley also said that he would like to see the Republicans and Democrats work together to make the ACA work better.

Volunteer Mary Herrera from Indivisible Elkton was pleased with the outcome for the ACA and said, "There is no way the Republican proposal did anything close to promising what Trump supporters voted for. It did nothing to lower costs and improve coverage."

Herrera said that Indivisible volunteers communicate with each other online.

Indivisible volunteer Kasey Hovik from Roseburg said that "people in rural communities need to stand together to make sure we have affordable care for the people who are the most sick and in need of help and can't afford it."

Hovik said the new act proposed by the Republicans called the American Health Care Act was not beneficial for rural Americans. He said the Republicans' plan would help the rich and make the poor sick.

"The plan didn't work, but we need to fight on," Hovik said. "We need to come up with a plan to make sure we have affordable care for everyone."

Dr. Rick Staggenborg, a retired psychiatrist from Roseburg and the president of Health Care for All Oregon [Douglas County], said, "The only way to significantly improve Obamacare is with a single payer health care system."

Staggenborg said that Merkley was one of four senators in favor of a single payer health care system.

Although the Republicans' health bill did not pass, Staggenborg said, "This is not done by a long shot. There is no way to improve ACA without starting over. Their goal is to reduce spending but they are doing it the wrong way."

Staggenborg said the country can save about 50 percent on total health care costs by going to a single payer system. In a single payer system, all the money the government spends on health care would come from a single source that would pay for everyone to have comprehensive health care.

"We might have to increase taxes a little bit to get everybody covered, but we will have no copays or deductibles and the average person will save money," Staggenborg said.