Advocates' call to keep Obamacare falls on deaf ears - Del Mar Times (cont'd)

Murray was one of a half dozen Californians who spoke at a May 3 press event in Solana Beach put on by a coalition of patient advocacy groups. That included Katrina Young from Carlsbad, whose son has outlived his prognosis of cystic fibrosis thanks to treatment she said they couldn't afford if not for Obamacare. And Andrew Johnson, who described how his sister might have lost her battle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma if not for Obamacare's provision that allows patients to stay on their parents' coverage until age 26.

The coalition — which includes the American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network, the state chapter of the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association and San Diegans for Health Care Coverage — depicted the cases as a fate that could befall millions of Californians if Obamacare were to be dismantled in the way Republicans have been vowing for years.

The advocates put particular focus on the 342,000 people on MediCal in the 49th Congressional District, which spans the North County and parts of Orange County.

Buoyed by the success of having beaten back Republican-led reform a month earlier, the advocates hoped to hold Rep. Darrell Issa, the Vista Republican, accountable to statements he had made last year that he wanted to push for reform that would guarantee coverage for pre-existing conditions.

As the advocates gathered at Unitarian Universalist Church of San Dieguito, lawmakers in Washington, D.C. were jockeying on a new package of reforms.

Only days earlier, Issa had drawn national attention by telling a reporter that his position on health care reform was "none of your business."

"We want to make sure he hears us loud and clear and votes to protect all of us with pre- existing conditions and make sure that nothing passes that takes away our coverage,

that would make it unaffordable and inaccessible," said the Cancer Action Network's Kay Coleman, also a Del Mar resident.

The following day, Issa went from headline-grabbing reticence to casting one of the final affirmative votes on Republican-led health care reform.

The bill needed 216 votes to pass the House. Some journalists watching the tally in Washington believe he cast that 216th vote. The bill got 217

affirmatives in all, sending it to the Senate, where it is expected to see significant changes before going to a vote.

"Let's stop pretending Obamacare is going to fix itself or that somehow, someday, it's going to get better," Issa said in a statement. "Today's vote gives a voice to the victims of Obamacare, the millions of Americans who are paying higher premiums, receiving less coverage and for whom the status quo offered no end in sight. Obamacare is doing real harm to California's families and struggling businesses, and constituents are counting on me to deliver real relief."

It's a move that Democrats — with their "Hey hey hey, goodbye" incantations — believe puts Issa squarely in their crosshairs for the 2018 election, especially given his unexpectedly close victory last year.

A coalition of patient advocates hosted a press event in Solana Beach on May 3 to draw attention to the plight millions of   Californians could face if Obamacare protections are rolled back. (Sebastian Montes)