



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Today's Date: June 24, 2009

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Salt Lake City – Yesterday, over 115 people gathered at 7 sites across the state to discuss national health reform and how proposed legislation will impact Utahns. The discussion highlighted Utahns experiences with getting or keeping quality, affordable health care coverage and outlined the incredibly complex proposals now under consideration by Congress.

“With all the rhetoric flying back and forth, it can be hard to follow what exactly is on the table and how these proposals will impact everyday Utahns,” said Jessica Kendrick, Community Engagement Director for Utah Health Policy Project. *“With help from our Storybank subjects, we translated the policy details into real world examples and explanations of how the reforms could help Utahns get or keep quality, affordable health care.”*

The event started off with a few attendees sharing their experiences with the current health care system. Conservative Republican Diane Knight from Orem finds health insurance more distressing than the fear of her breast cancer returning (read her full story [here](#)). Eric Spencer of Lehi, also Republican, has extensive experience as a contractor and is about to complete his MBA. But he can't start his own business because his wife has diabetes. Her pre-existing condition dictates that she can only get coverage as part of a group (watch a video of Eric sharing his story [here](#)). Scott Cooper from St. George is uninsured because he and his new wife simply can't afford to purchase health coverage.

“These stories outlined the need for comprehensive national health reforms, this year, that extend affordable, quality coverage to all Americans while bending the cost curve,” says Judi Hilman.

Four out of the five members of the delegation sent representatives to the discussion who spoke to the group and gathered constituent feedback. A statement was read from Senator Hatch outlining his 7 principles for health reform. “It's time for reform and I'm ready,” it concluded. Representatives from Senator Bennett, Congressman Matheson and Congressman Chaffetz also gave statements.

“We are glad to see that Utah Senators Hatch & Bennett and Congressman Matheson are at the table because they bring a serious, much needed focus on long-term fiscal responsibility to the reform process,” adds Hilman. “At the same time, we want to emphasize that the way to cost control is through coverage not around it. A [recent Commonwealth Fund report](#) explains what we mean by this and why we keep saying it.”

The second half of the event focused on gathering input and feedback from the attendees. Almost all attendees wanted comprehensive health reform passed *this year*. And a surprising consensus emerged around the need for a quality, affordable public health insurance option to compete on a level playing field with private insurers. Attendees in Farmington took a poll at their site and found 8 of 9 supported the public plan option, with the one still deciding.

A webcast of the entire event is saved online for you to view. Please visit: <http://codian.utahealth.net/> and enter the Recording ID: 325. You do not need a pin. The recording begins with all the set-up, so you should fast forward to about 29 minutes in.

A link further log-in instructions is available here: http://www.healthpolicyproject.org/Publications_files/Organizing/LiveWebInstructions.pdf

UHPP can put in touch with the storytellers and speakers from the event for further comment.