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Utah senators decry health care bill, advocates praise it

By James Thalman and Lee Davidson
Deseret News

Published: Thursday, Dec. 24, 2009 8:19 p.m. MST

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SALT LAKE CITY — Utah's senators say Americans really hate the health care reform bill that Democrats passed Thursday as a Christmas gift, and they should howl loud and long in hopes of making Congress return it for a better one. But some local advocates for children and others say it would be a shame to lose some of the immediate benefits it proposes by once again derailing the legislation.

"This health care bill is not what Americans wanted for Christmas," said Sen. Bob Bennett, R-Utah. "As senators go home and feel the anger of their constituents, there is still a chance that at least one will change his or her mind" and stop it as differences are worked out between House and Senate versions of the bill.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah called the bill a "mistake of historic proportions."

"This is only the beginning of the fight. This Senate-passed unconstitutional monstrosity will now have to be reconciled with an even bigger liberal tax-and-spend monstrosity on the House side," he said.

The Utah senators decry how Democrats were unable to attract any Republican votes for the bill in the Senate but pushed it through to final passage anyway.

Providing access to medical insurance to about 300,000 Utahns now without insurance is an important fix, and closing the gaps in medical care access for children, as the plan lays out is a huge plus, local reform advocates said.

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"First, no matter what the Utah editorial writers say, the final Senate proposal is indeed worthy, and it deserves to move forward to the next stage of the process," said Judi Hilman, executive director of the Utah Health Policy Project reform research and advocacy group.

Stronger and more specific cost containment measures would be helpful, as well as having a true public option for people who can't get insurance, even after the industry makes the expanded, simple, cheaper coverage it has promised under reform, she said.

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For all the fretting over costs and the controversy over whether reform should be done at all, there are several "it's about time" child-focused improvements in the bill, said Karen Crompton, executive director of the advocacy group Voices for Utah Children.

Under the plan, children would no longer be excluded from coverage because of a pre-existing condition, starting immediately. Adults could no longer be excluded or dropped from a plan because of a pre-existing condition, starting in 2014.

A Salt Lake doctor who has spent the past 20 years pushing for health care overhaul said there really won't be anything to improve on because the bill is hollow, and its changes are a new facade on the same old system.

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I am glad this passed !!!!

CAN SOMEBODY TELL ME ...WERE THE...

So Utah | Dec. 28, 2009 at 1:47 p.m.

If I were in Congress, and wanted to make health care insurance more...

G | Dec. 28, 2009 at 11:41 a.m.

He said, and I quote: "It costs too much and it reforms too little."...

Matheson got it right. . . | Dec. 26, 2009 at 7:51 a.m.

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