

# Fixes to Obamacare have little impact on Utah

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By [Wendy Leonard](#) and [Lisa Riley Roche](#), Deseret News

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*President Barack Obama speaks at the ArcelorMittal Cleveland steel plant, Thursday, Nov. 14, 2013, in Cleveland. Changes to the Affordable Care Act proposed by President Barack Obama on Thursday won't likely have too much of an effect in Utah, as preemptive decisions by state lawmakers already grandfathered certain plans through the end of next year.*

SALT LAKE CITY — Changes to the Affordable Care Act proposed by President Barack Obama on Thursday won't likely have too much of an effect in Utah, as preemptive decisions by state lawmakers already grandfathered certain plans through the end of next year.

However, Obama's one-year extension of current policies may impact about 3 to 7 percent of Utahns who still have options, according to Jason Stevenson, education and communications director for the Utah Health Policy Project advocacy group.

He said people looking for new plans can use the federal health insurance marketplace ([healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov)) to shop for a new plan and determine their eligibility for financial assistance. In the meantime, those who have received cancellation notices can purchase short-term, monthly insurance coverage "to give you extra time," Stevenson said.

Holding the entire Affordable Care Act responsible for recent glitches and hold-ups, he said, is unfair.

"It hasn't been working well and it really has been hurting our ability to enroll people here in Utah, but it is not the entire game out there," Stevenson said. "There's a lot happening in the

insurance marketplace in Utah and across the country where the Affordable Care Act is working."

He said the way the Affordable Care Act has played out so far "mirrors the rollout of many other large government programs."

"There are still a lot of people in the pipeline to get more affordable, higher quality insurance," Stevenson said, adding that recent negativity doesn't reflect the good things brought about by the relatively new law.

Gov. Gary Herbert said Thursday during his monthly news conference on KUED Ch. 7 that a bipartisan solution to problems with health care reform needs to be found. But he warned that it won't be easy.

"Once you lose confidence, once you set a trajectory, it's hard to get that trust back and that confidence," the governor said.

Herbert said the president has an opportunity to bring Republicans and Democrats together because "everyone seems to agree there are fixes that need to be made."

The governor also called the rollout of the health care law "an abysmal failure" and said it is hurting the economy.

"Clearly the biggest problem I see is with the economic impact. The uncertainty of what the Affordable Care Act, Obamacare, is doing to the private sector is a big concern," Herbert said.

That uncertainty, he said, is "having a significant negative impact on the marketplace. I think we all — any rational person — says this rollout has been an abysmal failure."

Herbert also said he is still considering whether to expand Medicaid coverage in Utah, an option under the Affordable Care Act. He said he expects to make a decision before the start of the 2014 Legislature in late January.

"It's a very complex issue. It's easy for people to have a knee-jerk, do this or do that, or don't do this or don't do that, without understanding all the ramifications or complications," the governor said in a brief interview.

He dismissed a call by Utah's Family Investment Coalition for his upcoming state budget to include two scenarios, reflecting the projected costs and savings for both accepting the expansion and its accompanying federal matching funds, and not expanding Medicaid in Utah.

Herbert said his budget, expected to be released in December, "has no bearing on Medicaid expansion." He said he has no ability to propose two budgets for the state.

