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# Bryan Schott's Political BS: Herbert Keeps on Keeping On

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Everybody has got to stop underestimating Gary Herbert.

[Tuesday's release of a public opinion poll](#) showing Utahns overwhelmingly support Herbert's "Healthy Utah" alternative to Medicaid expansion is just the latest data point showing he is a formidable political force in this state - yet, he has the reputation among many lawmakers as a feckless lightweight who lacks a backbone.

Yet, somehow he keeps racking up big political wins.

Utah's economy keeps roaring along. He got a huge PR victory when he re-opened the state's national parks during the government shutdown. [He's the most popular governor in the country](#) with a 73-percent approval rating.

Now, this poll shows he's probably going to get most of what he wants from the feds and the legislature with his "Healthy Utah" plan, despite any protests from lawmakers.

*"All I do is win win no matter what" - T-Pain*

Flashback to the opening day of the 2014 session. House Speaker Becky Lockhart, who wants to be Governor so bad she probably writes "Governor Becky Lockhart" on her notebooks, [likened any sort of Medicaid expansion to treason](#).

Lawmakers have said they don't want to make any decisions on Medicaid expansion, or Herbert's alternative, until the 2015 election. Herbert said [he expects to win approval from the feds](#) for a big chunk of Healthy Utah within 30 days and [wants to have the plan in place by January](#).

Given all the empirical evidence we have, it's not hard to predict how this will turn out. Lawmakers will make a ton of noise about opposing a special session to approve Herbert's plan. There will be lots of behind the scenes negotiating. Eventually lawmakers will cave and Herbert wins. Again.

If Herbert decides to run for another term in 2016, woe be unto anyone who decides to challenge him.

How on Earth does someone (ahem, Lockhart) make the case to voters that Herbert needs to go? He hasn't made any mistakes. Sure, Democrats don't like him much, and Tea Party types will want to get rid of him because he's somehow turning Utah into a socialist death camp (just don't ask them to explain how). There's just not a critical mass of Utahns who want change in the Governor's mansion right now.

Are Herbert's policies hurting Utah? There's just no argument anyone can make right now that voters will buy.

Maybe if the cast of the Princess Bride were to join a ticket opposing Herbert, things could get interesting.

Another problem for any challenger will be raising money. How do you get donors to give you money to challenge a sitting governor with a 73-percent approval rating? That seems like a losing proposition - and donors like to bet on a winner.

Before "Count My Vote" and SB54, a challenge to Herbert from the political Right seemed like a possibility. Now that there's another path to the ballot outside of the caucus system, that's much iffier.

The only thing that could derail the Herbert express is if he decides to not run for another term in 2016. He told Bob Bernick and I at the end of the 2014 session he would make his decision sometime this summer.

If he decides to take another run, the best advice for anyone eyeing a challenge to him is to simply get off the tracks because the political pain train is coming through.