

Poll: While Lawmakers Mostly Oppose It, Public Strongly Supports Health Care Expansion

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by [Ryan Curtis](#) • June 17, 2014



A new poll conducted by Dan Jones & Associates shows that an overwhelming number of Utah voters support Republican Governor Gary Herbert's Healthy Utah plan and closing the health insurance coverage gap.

The authors of the survey, conducted in May and June of this year, presented their findings at a press conference on Tuesday morning at the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce. When compared with the option of doing nothing, 88% of Utah voters prefer the Healthy Utah plan. In a three-way comparison between the governor's Healthy Utah plan, full Medicaid Expansion as prescribed by the Affordable Care Act, and doing nothing, 65% support Healthy Utah, 29% favor Medicaid Expansion, and 6% prefer the status quo.

The Healthy Utah plan enjoys broad support from across the political spectrum. 84% of voters who consider themselves to be very conservative support the plan, with 79% of very liberal and 94% of moderate voters in favor as well.

According to the survey, a majority of Utah voters believe that health insurance is important. When asked whether "all legal Utah residents should have access to affordable health insurance," 83% of the voters surveyed answered in the affirmative.

The survey was sponsored by a number of organizations, including AARP Utah, the American Cancer Association Cancer Action Network, the Association for Utah Community Health, Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, the Utah Health Policy Project, the Utah Hospital Association, and Voices for Utah Children.

Under Herbert's proposed plan, Utah would seek a state innovations waiver that would allow Utah to use a block grant from the federal government to support the three-year pilot program. The funds would be used to provide assistance to individuals who make under \$15,500 a year. The exact amount given to each person would depend on their ability to work, household income, access to employer or family health insurance, family size, and individual health care needs.

The idea of health care expansion, however, is far less popular among state lawmakers than it is among the public. Every piece of health care related legislation either failed to see the light of day or failed on chamber floors. Plans for a special session to specifically address health care expansion have been scuttled by powerful lawmakers such as House Speaker Becky Lockhart (Republican – Provo) who, instead, have opted to further study the issue.