

## Paul Rolly: Utah lawmaker has his own definition of death panels

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By now, you may have heard about the recent comments uttered at a Health Reform Task Force meeting by Rep. Mike Kennedy, R-Alpine.

His remarks that access to hospitals kill people and his suggestion that we should not expand access to health care because it can be dangerous has once again shown Utah as an apparently goofy place deserving of national ridicule.

Not since former state [Sen. Chris Butters](#), R-West Jordan, floated the idea of eliminating the 12th grade and [Rep. Curt Oda](#), R-Clearfield, proposed a bill making it OK to shoot feral cats have pundits had so much fun with a Beehive State officeholder.

To recap: When one doctor testifying before the task force talked about a neighbor who was in a car crash and suffered a rare response to pain medicine, which caused unforeseen complications, Kennedy could not resist dumping on the federally subsidized expansion of Medicaid.

Utah is one of the states [still holding out against Medicaid](#) expansion — despite the recent run of red states that worked out deals with the Obama administration to take the deal, getting hundreds of thousands more people covered with health insurance and still making it palatable to their conservative constituents.

Can't do that in Utah. Expanding health care coverage would kill people, according to Kennedy.

"Sometimes access actually can mean harm," said Kennedy, a family physician, [according to a Fox 13 report](#).

"Sometimes access to health care can be damaging and dangerous," he continued to a room of stunned observers. "And it's a perspective for the [legislative body] to consider is that, I've heard from National Institutes of Health and otherwise that we're killing up to a million, a million and a half people every year in our hospitals. And it's access to hospitals that's killing those people."

The witness pointed out that millions more are helped by hospitals, but that didn't sway Kennedy.

His comments then popped up on blogs, twitter and media sites. They were mocked on the [blog of MSNBC's Rachel Maddow](#).

But some perspective is needed here. Kennedy is from Utah County, a tea party hotbed that has spawned all sorts of interesting justifications to resist progressive ideas.

In that county, home to the Utah Eagle Forum, various folks have argued that access to contraceptives prompts people to have illicit sex, that sex education in schools heightens teen pregnancy, that watching someone mix a drink can turn kids into alcoholics, that legalizing same-sex marriage can lead to more gay people and that the Common Core creates socialists.

In that vein, here are other suggestions for the Utah Legislature:

- Stop funding road work because automobile accidents kill people.
- Cease building or expanding airports because plane crashes kill people.
- Close restaurants because diners have been known to get food poisoning.
- Shutter public schools because sometimes mass shootings take place there.
- Do away with police departments because sometimes there are officer-involved shootings.
- Ban public access to Utah legislative meetings because sometimes lawmakers say dumb things and make the state a laughingstock.

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