

## Public ire felt at forum

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ST. GEORGE - Comments and questions during an emotional community forum that was unruly at times, were varied as numerous people questioned health care reform.

The community forum was sponsored by Utah Healthy Policy Project, a non-profit Utah based organization that works on health care issues in the state and Consumers Union, the non-profit publisher of Consumer Reports.

The response to the community forum was overwhelming and many people weren't able to get into the meeting room at the St. George library where the forum was held Thursday night.

A panel of speakers gave some information and background on health care reform before the floor was turned over to members of the audience for a question and answer period.

Doug Brown asked how much health care reform would cost, how you could trust a 1,000 page bill and why the bill needed to be passed so fast.

"In due respect, this bill, I feel, isn't about health care reform, really, it's about the social re-engineering of America," Brown said.

Jessica Kendrick, community engagement director with Utah Healthy Policy Project answered Brown's question about cost, stating that health care reform is expected to cost \$1 trillion over 10 years.

Kendrick's response brought a lot of laughter.

Local family physician Dr. Kerry Stratford said health care reform needs to focus on access, cost and quality.

Questions were brought up about end of life care and health care for illegal aliens. Others, like Brown, questioned the urgency of the bill which the panel responded to by saying that health care costs are one-sixth of our economy and continue to rise.

Cass McArthur questioned page 838 of the health care reform bill.

McArthur said there is a provision that states there is to be home visitation for people with small children.

"I want to know what that's about and I want to know who the hell gives the government the right to come into my home and tell me what the best thing is for my children," she said.

Several people asked where Congressman Jim Matheson was and someone else asked, to be fair, where Sens. Hatch and Bennett were.

About 90 minutes into the meeting, several people walked in with signs about change and Obama which brought out a round of shouting, and several attempts by moderator Alan Crooks to get the signs removed from the room, or lowered, were unsuccessful.

Several people began yelling at each other and several people left the forum, one woman commenting that she was going to leave before the shooting started, although four St. George police officers were on hand at the meeting.

Steve Barone commented that he has worked since he was 12-years-old, was a Vietnam era veteran and had a heart attack five years ago. Barone said all it would take is one tiny (health) problem and he and his wife would lose everything they had accumulated.

Barone asked the people with the signs where they had been for the last eight years and asked if he was a bad guy because he voted for Obama. Barone's comment were met with applause and boos.

Elizabeth Garbe, the coverage initiatives director with the Utah Healthy Policy Project said she was very pleased with the turnout and said health care reform is an emotional issue but the status quo is not sustainable.

"Health reform is making sure health insurance is there for you when you need it," she said.

Kendrick said the community forum was designed to engage more Utahans in the health care debate and help people learn more about the legislation, the impact health care reform would have on families and small businesses and help bring them peace of mind and security.

Barone said after he spoke that he felt that the message about health care reform was getting lost.

"Obama is trying to do good for America but there are people causing enough doubt that I am concerned that there may not be health care reform," he said.