

Governor Huntsman Signs Health Reform Bills

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(KCPW News) Governor Jon Huntsman warns the road to comprehensive health care reform will be long, but he urges the public to be patient. Huntsman signed five health reform bills yesterday to begin the journey.

"We have said from the very beginning that it is in fact a multi-year effort," Huntsman says. "But suffice it to say, that we as a state, are at the very forefront of health system reform. It is multi-faceted, it is complex, it is politically sensitive - it takes all hands on deck to make it work."

One of the most important bills signed by the governor yesterday is House Bill 133, which creates the task force. House Majority Leader and Sponsor Dave Clark pledges to make it an action committee and not a political black hole. He will co-chair the taskforce and intends to create five to six subcommittees to study specific issues. These committees will likely include representatives from business and medicine, as well as advocates for low-income and disabled Utahns - although Clark has yet to finalize who will have a seat at the table. Judi Hilman of the Utah Health Policy Project says she is hopeful about the process, but still has some concerns.

"What we don't want to have happen is you don't want the advocates off by themselves, and the providers off by themselves," Hilman says. "Because when you get right down to it, we're talking about one health care system, and so we need to be working together to work out the details of reform."

The five health reform bills signed by the governor Wednesday included the creation of the task force, a tax credit for individuals who purchase private health insurance, an expansion of the Children's Health Insurance Program, and a the creation of a new electronic medical records system.