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Hatch, business owner decry Obama administration's health care law

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SALT LAKE CITY — On the one year anniversary since President Barack Obama signed the The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into law, Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch and Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff appeared at Utah Metal Works, a metal recycling company.

Hatch took the opening shot against Obamacare, saying the law needs to be scrapped.

"There are too many taxes, too much spending, too much government," Hatch said.

Utah Metal Works owner Mark Lewon said he agrees health care needs to be handled differently and that the uninsured should be entitled to health coverage. But he said some of the details within the bill make it hard for small-business owners like himself. Lewon has 41 employees.

"My question is whether you want to have a 2,000 page bill adjust everything that's wrong with health care, or you want to break it down to little bites," Lewon said. "And there's a lot of things I don't like about the bill."

Lewon fears his scrap metal business will take a back seat to endless paperwork and costs in the future.

But for 20-year-old Derek Chang, a pre-med student at the University of Utah, the law means he can stay on his parents' health care plan while he's an undergrad.

He doesn't have any health worries right now. But he's thankful for the new law.

"I see a lot of people struggling with their medical conditions," Chang said during a break from studying. "I see a lot of people struggling with their medical conditions and unable to pay for it, and they have to go to a free clinic. So I believe that what Obama is doing is actually a good thing."

Judi Hilman of the Utah Health Policy Project said she is constantly fighting to educate people about what the bill does and what it doesn't do.

Hatch summed those fears up at the news conference.

"There are all sorts of costs they didn't count on and didn't think would happen, and I have to tell you they are running our country right into the ground," the senator said. "What's happening is, they're going to play some Washington bureaucrat between you and your doctors."

Hilman said those are among the myths about the law; that it will institute so-called "death panels," that it's a government takeover and that it will add to the deficit.

He said taxpayers already shell out big bucks because everyone who is taken to the emergency room gets treatment regardless of their ability to pay.

"That's a mandate already," Hilman said. "So what we're trying to do is shift that cost so it's a little more cost effective. We're paying for health care on the front end, and we're all sharing that responsibility."

Hatch and Shurtleff say requiring health care for everyone is unconstitutional. Shurtleff joined 25 other attorneys general last year in a lawsuit filed against the federal government in Florida. A Florida judge ruled the law unconstitutional in January but stayed his ruling after an appeal was filed earlier this month by the Obama administration.

It is expected the issue will wind up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

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