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Matheson to vote 'no' on health care bill

November 6th, 2009 @ 6:49pm By Richard Platt

SALT LAKE CITY -- Utah Congressman Jim Matheson planned a series of amendments to the health care reform bill. It was a last-ditch effort to make it better, he says. But Friday, Matheson abandoned those plans and said he will now vote no.

"Those amendments have been proposed, but it's not likely they're going to be brought up for a vote. So, at this point, I just don't think the vote, as it's structured now, accomplishes what we need it to, which is why I'm a no," Matheson says."

He says he supports reform that covers uninsured Americans but keeps the system stable and affordable. The current Democrat plan would expand coverage, but cost \$1.2 trillion over 10 years.

"This is a very complicated issue about how we control the growth of health care costs in America and how we cover the insured. And so I think most people want to make sure we get it right," Matheson says.

But Judi Hilman, of the Utah Health Policy Project, wants Matheson to bite the bullet and vote yes. That's in spite of the price tag and other imperfections, she says.

"For Utah to not have a t least one voice in this historic moment is not acceptable, and he is that voice," Hilman says.

Dermatologist Paul Harrison, on the other hand, wants Matheson to vote no.

"I think the bill needs to be scrapped," Harrison says.

He is part of the Coalition to Protect Patients Rights--a group of Utah doctors with ideas of what reform should look like.

"We should be growing the market, not the government. We should have tort reform so we can practice less defensive medicine," Harrison says.

It looks like the vote on the House bill might get pushed back to Sunday. If it passes then, it still needs to reconcile with the Senate version of health reform, which means the discussion isn't over.

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