

Governor Herbert announces federal approval for Medicaid expansion alternative

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Video: <http://www.clipsyndicate.com/video/play/5409428>

Link: <http://www.good4utah.com/story/d/story/governor-herbert-announces-federal-approval-for-me/33891/qTURHxOV6kCwzECg4los2A>

(ABC 4 Utah) – Governor Gary Herbert's plan to bridge the coverage gap for an estimated 57,000 Utahns is making progress.

After months of back and forth negotiations with the federal government, an agreement has been reached on the Healthy Utah Plan.

"I think they are giving us more flexibility than has been given to any other state in America and we are breaking some new ground," said Herbert, (R) Ut.

Healthy Utah will utilize a \$258,000,000 federal block grant to provide private insurance plans for Utahns at or below 138% of the poverty level.

The governor says it's not perfect, but the best alternative to Medicaid expansion on the table.

"Respecting the tax payers, helping those who need some assistance to help themselves and get off of government assistance into a better job," said Herbert.

Now the governor has to get the state legislature to sign off, which will not include a special session.

Instead the plan will be debated during the general session.

Representative Jim Dunnigan says the extra time will be needed to work out concerns over accepting federal [funds](#) and having the ability to make adjustments through the life of the program.



"I don't think the legislature is ready to say yes or no. We have got to vet it, we've got to see the details and what we would be committing to as a state," said Dunnigan, (R) Ut.

Advocacy groups are encouraged by the progress, but know time is of the essence for those going without coverage.

"As long as we're continuing to talk about this issue and the likelihood of it passing increases by waiting, which I think it would because of the makeup of the leadership right now, then that is alright," said RyLee Curtis with Utah [Health](#) Policy Project.

In between now and the general session the governor will be working with key legislative leaders behind closed doors.

There will also be a 30 day public comment period.

The governor is optimistic a final agreement will be in place by the end of the session.