



Herbert hits back at group opposing Medicaid plan

<http://www.standard.net/Government/2014/11/15/Herbert-Medicaid-plan-opponents-won-t-sway-Utah.html>

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SALT LAKE CITY — A Florida-based conservative group is working to derail Gov. Gary Herbert's alternative plan for Medicaid expansion, but the governor said he thinks the campaign won't work.

"I think the people of Utah and our Legislature are smart enough to reject that kind of outside influence," Herbert said at his monthly televised news conference on KUED.

Herbert said the group was distorting his plan, called "Healthy Utah."

The Foundation for Government Accountability has launched a website and online petition at unhealthyutah.com, and sent mailers opposing the plan to Utah residents, the Deseret News reports (<http://bit.ly/1GYb1ao>).

Foundation director Jonathan Ingram said in a statement that it's a shame that the governor doesn't want a comprehensive discussion of the plan.

"It's telling that he is unable to debate the actual policy and instead criticizes our geography," Ingram said. "If he doesn't want taxpayers outside of Utah to discuss his Obamacare expansion plans, he shouldn't demand taxpayers everywhere pay for it."

The foundation is a nonprofit and does not have to report its backers or register with Utah.

Herbert, a Republican, said the group is working against his plan because it doesn't like President Barack Obama's signature health care law.

"Guess what, this may not be a news flash to you but may be to them — I don't like it, either," he said. "I feel like I've been given lemons as do many states, and I'm trying to take those lemons and make as best a lemonade as I can out of them."

Thousands of poor Utah adults are not currently eligible for Medicaid, and because of a flaw in the law, they're also ineligible for tax credits to pay for private insurance offered on the federal health care website. To address those gaps, the federal government has offered to pick up most of the cost if states expand their Medicaid programs.

Herbert is negotiating the final details of his plan, which would instead use federal money to enroll low-income Utah residents in private health insurance plans. He hopes to roll out the plan to state lawmakers early next month with the hope they'll take it up when their session begins in January.

Both federal officials and Utah lawmakers must approve a plan, but there's no deadline to approve one.