

Legislative Session Ends with no Medicaid Expansion Plan

KUER-FM

March 13, 2014

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Link: <http://kuer.org/post/legislative-session-ends-no-medicaid-expansion-plan>

Audio: [http://cpa.ds.npr.org/kuer/audio/2015/03/HealthcareFuture WEB.mp3](http://cpa.ds.npr.org/kuer/audio/2015/03/HealthcareFuture_WEB.mp3)



Governor Gary Herbert stands with new task force assigned to develop a solution to the healthcare coverage gap.

The Utah legislative session ended with no solution to the healthcare coverage gap, but Governor Gary Herbert and GOP state lawmakers say they have a plan.

On the last day of the session, the governor held a press conference with House and Senate leaders and

acknowledged that the general session would end without solving the insurance coverage gap in Utah. But he promised a solution by this summer.

“We all are committing to the people of Utah,” Herbert said. “We understand who we represent. We are here to do the work of the people and find a solution to this difficult issue, and we will.”

Herbert announced the formation of a 6-member task force comprised of the major players in the healthcare decision. He promised they would hash out a plan by the end of July. They would then meet in a special legislative session to pass the deal. House Speaker Greg Hughes has so far resisted the governor’s plan for Medicaid expansion, but he says he’s excited to work with this team.

“I believe with the leadership that we have here in the state of Utah that we will find solutions, sustainable solutions that do better than we are, and what we have found here in this session and do right by our constituents,” Hughes said.

“I think this time it’s going to happen,” says Matt Slonaker, Executive Director of Utah Health Policy Project, an organization that has been pushing for a Medicaid expansion in the state for years. “They guaranteed everybody that spoke today including the president of the Senate, the House Speaker and the Governor, that they were going to find a solution. I think that is a commitment they made to the public, they made to the stakeholders, and we’re going to hold their feet to the fire.”

But House Minority Whip Rebecca Chavez-Houck is not as optimistic.

“The optimism is really dissipating with each month that goes by and each session that goes by without action,” Chavez-Houck says. “With every month of indecision, people get sicker and people die.”

Chavez-Houck says she’s dismayed that there are no Democrats appointed to the task force, and she hopes they will be included in the process going forward.