

No deal, but governor says Medicaid expansion not dead

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Video: <http://www.kutv.com/news/features/top-stories/stories/No-deal-but-governor-says-Medicaid-expansion-not-dead-102300.shtml#.VQhJG47F8wA>



On the last day of the legislative session, Gov. Herbert announced there would be no deal by midnight on his so-called Healthy Utah Medicaid expansion plan, and a House version widely reported to cover fewer people and cost the state more.

Instead, the governor said he and legislative leaders would

work over the next four months to reach an agreement -- by July 31 -- and then he'll call lawmakers into special session to vote on it.

Asked what he thought about the prospects of an acceptable deal, after months of debate that did not move House Republicans, Herbert said he was "optimistic" about the talks.

Dr. Tom Metcalf, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said he felt officials, including House Speaker Greg Hughes, were entering into negotiations in "good faith."

Still, Metcalf said the wait will hurt.

"We're going to have more people uninsured for another four months," said Metcalf. "People will die. People will get sick, and not be able to take care of it."

Lawmakers, leery of the governor's plan, are reportedly worried about the sustainability of the program. While the federal government would cover much of the costs initially, they wonder if the money will flow long term.

The Utah Health Policy Project, which promotes Medicaid expansion, said in a 2014 report that roughly 58,000 people in Utah are in the coverage gap. They don't make enough to be eligible for tax credits to help cover medical premiums, but even at incomes just a little below the federal poverty level, make too much to qualify for Medicaid outright.

The UHPP said any state that expands Medicaid to cover people up to 138% percent of the federal poverty level, the federal government will pay 100% of the costs through 2016, "then phase down to 90% by 2022."

