

# Utah Allies for Medicaid Expansion “Still Waiting” for Action

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Link: <http://kuer.org/post/utah-allies-medicaid-expansion-still-waiting-action>

Audio: [http://cpa.ds.npr.org/kuer/audio/2015/07/Medicaid\\_WEB.mp3](http://cpa.ds.npr.org/kuer/audio/2015/07/Medicaid_WEB.mp3)

A coalition of Utah progressives, religious leaders, and advocates for the poor launched a campaign Wednesday to demand action on the healthcare coverage gap for low income citizens.

Lauren Howells of the Alliance for a Better Utah stood in front of dozens of community leaders on the Capitol steps. She counted 898 days since Utah had the first opportunity to expand healthcare coverage to the state’s low-income citizens, and three legislative sessions gone by with no action. They wore t-shirts that said “still waiting”.



“After a series of self-imposed deadlines and unfulfilled promises, our legislators have squandered yet another opportunity to make a decision that would positively impact the lives of well over 100,000 Utahns,” Howells said. “Our legislature has no more excuses, we are still waiting, but we will wait no longer.”

The group called in particular on Republican House lawmakers to commit to a plan that would provide coverage to those in the gap and to bring back tax dollars that Utahns are paying to the federal government. To date, they estimate Utah has lost out on 445 million federal dollars that the state would have received if it had expanded Medicaid. Crystal Young-Otterstrom is Chair of the LDS Democrats. She says polls show a majority of Utahns favor the governor’s Healthy Utah Plan, and yet House Republicans are not hearing that from enough of their constituents.

“If they felt like their electoral success in 2016 depended on passing Healthy Utah, it would happen today, but they think their voters aren’t educated enough to know about this,” Young-Otterstrom says.

House Majority Leader Jim Dunnigan told KUER last week that the group of six Republican lawmakers tasked with hashing out an alternative Medicaid expansion plan is still working, but he did not say when they would be ready to present that plan.