

Our View: How to screw up Medicaid

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Standard-Examiner Editorial Board

We're not at all surprised at the cypher of a Medicaid deal that a six-member group has "reached" to [expand Medicaid in Utah](#). No one really expected the group to accomplish much; nevertheless, it's disappointing each time we consider what vulnerable Utahns lost when the House rejected Gov. Gary Herbert's Healthy Utah Plan.

Through patient negotiation, the state had managed to retain its autonomy and compromise with the Obama administration, accepting the funds necessary to expand Medicaid per the Affordable Care Act. The state Senate wisely endorsed Healthy Utah.

Alas, a majority of the House allowed their loathing of all things Obama to supersede Medicaid progress, and rejected the deal, offering a piddling alternative ironically dubbed Utah Cares.

With dueling plans, a six-member group was tasked to find a solution. Last week, after closed meetings, it announced a very broad, vague outline for legislators to tackle. There's a claim that the plan will expand Medicaid to 138 percent of the poverty level, but the funding mechanisms are hazy.

Allegedly, doctors, hospitals, etc., are to foot the costs, which the groups says will cost Utah \$78 million a year. But, frankly, despite a lot of talk, there are no firm deals with hospital or medical professionals. This will have to be hashed out over several months; nothing is guaranteed.

Also, the group expects some flexibility from the federal government, which needs to agree with the plan. Given the time-consuming, good-faith negotiations to agree on Healthy Utah, the chances of the feds signing on with this substitute seems unlikely.

What we are witnessing is another chapter on how to screw up Medicaid.