

# Poll: Utahns Optimistic Lawmakers Can Find a Compromise on Medicaid Expansion by July 31

UtahPolicy.com

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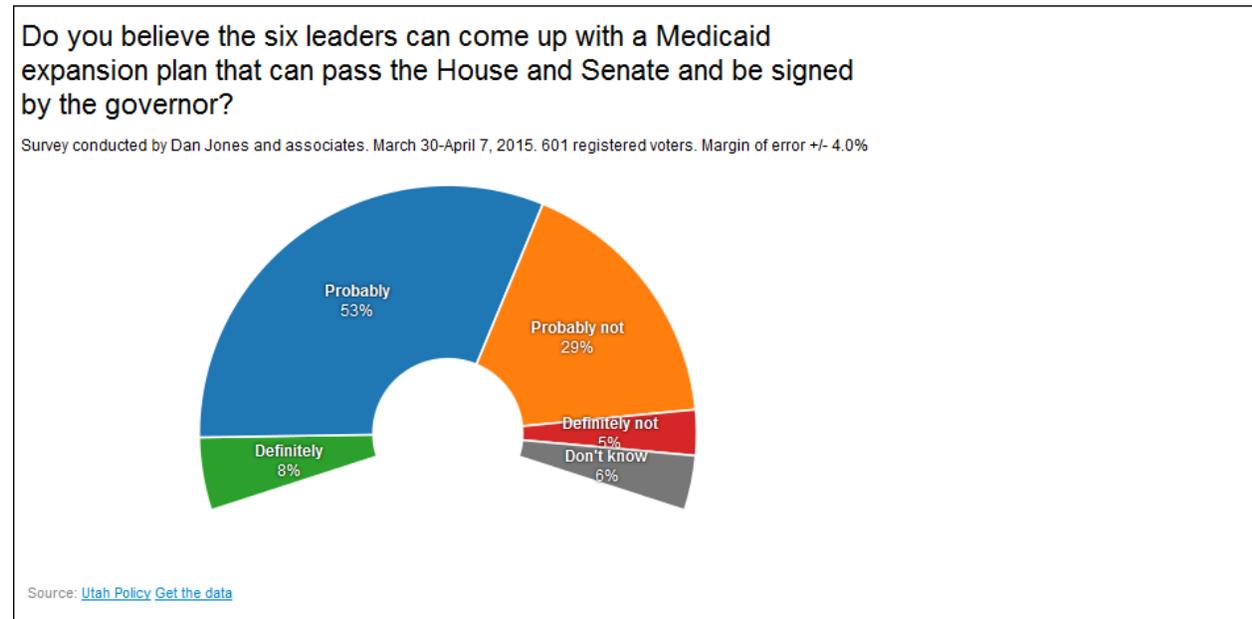
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Most Utahns think GOP Gov. Gary Herbert’s “Super 6” committee can reach some compromise on Medicaid expansion by mid-summer, a new UtahPolicy poll shows.

After his “Healthy Utah” expansion plan had failed in the Utah House in the just-completed 2015 general session, Herbert announced the unprecedented committee, made up of himself; Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox; Senate President Wayne Niederhauser, R-Sandy; House Speaker Greg Hughes, R-Draper; House Majority Leader Jim Dunnigan, R-Taylorsville; and Sen. Brian Shiozawa, R-Cottonwood Heights.

The Super 6 have until July 31 to come up with a Medicaid expansion compromise, and will hold private meetings and likely travel to Washington, D.C., to meet with Obama administration Health and Human Services officials.



Pollster Dan Jones & Associates found in a new survey that 61 percent of registered voters believe the Super 6 can come up with a deal that can pass the state House and Senate.

Thirty-four percent said the committee will likely fail, and 6 percent didn't know.

The poll was conducted March 30-April 7 of 601 registered voters and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.0 percent.

As reported extensively during the 45-day general session, House Republicans didn't like Healthy Utah, saying it would cost too much, and federal funding in the future is uncertain.

They instead backed Dunnigan's plan, Utah Cares, which would cover poorer Utahns from zero to 100 percent of the federal poverty level, relying on a less-extensive federal health plan, PCN, to cover poorer Utahns who made more than 100 percent of poverty income.

Herbert and some GOP senators, including Niederhauser, said Utah Cares is short-sighted, costs more in the short run than Healthy Utah, and doesn't cover as many medical issues as Healthy Utah.

It was a real stalemate.

Now post-session several GOP House members tell UtahPolicy that while they hope some compromise can be reached by the Super 6, the hard reality is that most House Republicans don't want to go above 100 percent of poverty in any new entitlement program.

While Healthy Utah covers folks up to 138 percent of poverty, as Obamacare instructs.

Dunnigan and other House GOP leaders have pegged their hopes on the Obama administration giving Utah broader waivers than any other state has received – thus making Utah Cares more attractive to Herbert and senators.

No Democrats sit on the Super 6 committee. It's all Republicans.

And Republicans hold the governorship and super-majorities in both the state House and Senate.

Thus, it is not surprising that Jones found that Utah GOP rank-and-file have more faith in the Super 6 reaching a compromise than do Democrats and political independents.

Jones finds:

-- 71 percent of Republicans believe a Super 6 compromise can be reached, 23 percent said negotiations will fail, and 5 percent of Republicans didn't know.

-- 45 percent of Democrats say the Super 6 will succeed, 48 percent say no deal will be reached, and 7 percent didn't know.

-- 54 percent of political independents say the group will reach a deal, 40 percent say no and 5 percent didn't know.

Herbert has said publicly that the Super 6 group will find a compromise – he even “promised” such an outcome.

But as UtahPolicy reported [earlier](#), the large 63-member House GOP caucus seems resolved not to start a new entitlement program for low-income Utahns that reaches 100 percent of the federal poverty line.

In a normal political compromise, both sides may move toward the middle of their opposite positions.

So, if House Republicans say nothing over 100 percent, and senators and Herbert are at 138 percent of poverty in coverage, then a compromise may cover folks up to 120 percent of poverty.

But that doesn't work, in this case, for Obamacare provides one federal match formula up to 100 percent of poverty, another match split with the state from 100 percent to 138 percent.

You get the same federal match from 101 percent to 137 percent, so there is no incentive to reach any compromise in between – it doesn't make sense.

In any case, most Utahns feel the Super 6 can succeed.

And we'll wait to see if their optimism is fulfilled.