

Republican caucus votes 56-7 not to expand Medicaid, eats cake

KUTV (CBS-2)

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Video: <https://kutv.com/news/local/republican-caucus-votes-56-7-not-to-expand-medicaid-in-utah>

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(KUTV) In a Republicans-only meeting, a 56-7 vote was taken not to expand Medicaid in Utah.

The vote likely ends months of work to bring hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal government as part of the U.S. healthcare law from President Obama. Utah

contributes to the national healthcare budget pool, but Utah lawmakers have not been able to pass a plan to bring that money back to Utah to cover those who don't have any healthcare, including many working adults and their families caught in what is commonly referred to as an economic gap.



Republican Gov. Gary Herbert tried to pass a Healthy Utah measure in the 2015 Utah legislative session but it failed to gain support. Months of negotiations, including a proposal to tax healthcare providers, failed Tuesday night, ending Medicaid expansion.

"What we're seeing is that the House is not really excited about this," Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox said last week, before the meeting. He has been Herbert's point man on Medicaid expansion. "We have been working at this three years."

Herbert released a statement Tuesday after the vote:

"Unfortunately, the House of Representatives defeated Healthy Utah and continues to push back against other proposals, even those crafted by their own legislative leadership."

Herbert's Healthy Utah plan failed in the Utah Legislature and a new plan to use Medicaid money to provide health insurance to Utah poor was mired in the Utah House.

Currently about \$680 million goes to the federal government each year for national healthcare. Herbert's original plan would have returned \$446 million of that money to Utah and insured 90,000 Utahns.

"Or we could leave the money in Washington," the governor said before the 2015 Legislative session.

It appears that will be the case.

Cox said the governor and lawmakers will look for a way forward last week, but Medicaid expansion appears to be dead.

Speaker of the House Greg Hughes declined to detail who voted for or against the proposal in a post-caucus press conference.

The group also celebrated Hughes' birthday with a cake.

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