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Utah Voters Support Governor's "Healthy Utah" Plan to Expand Medicaid

Posted By [Laura Polacheck](#) On June 20, 2014 @ 5:35 pm In [Health & Wellbeing, Utah](#) | [No Comments](#)



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Medicaid expansion is still a hot potato issue in Utah, with the Utah Legislature failing to agree what if any expansion should occur in the state for the program. Medicaid is a federal program run by the states that provides health care coverage to the lowest income Americans. In order to qualify in Utah, you not only have to be low income, but you must also fall into a category of eligibility such as being a pregnant women, a child, a senior or disabled. Unfortunately, there are many lower-income adults and parents in Utah who don't qualify for coverage because they don't fit into one of the categories. They also don't qualify for a subsidy on the new health insurance marketplace because they don't earn enough. These roughly 57,000 Utahns fall into the "coverage gap" and would benefit from a Medicaid expansion.

But Governor Gary Herbert introduced "Healthy Utah," a plan that would use federal dollars to put most recipients into private insurance plans, require individual premiums and co-pays, and have a work requirement that people seek resources on job placement. This plan would cover low-income adults below 138 percent of the federal poverty line, thereby taking away the gap in coverage for people too poor or ineligible for coverage right now in the state.

So what do Utahns think of the plan? AARP Utah and several other civic groups sponsored a poll to see what kind of support this "Utah solution" would have in the state. The findings were impressive. Almost 90 percent of those surveyed support the plan across party lines. Although Utah is a state that supports individual responsibility, both Republicans and Democrats surveyed strongly supported a government role (through the use of federal dollars) in helping low-income Utahns obtain affordable, quality coverage. Some numbers include the following:

83% believe “all legal Utah residents should have access to affordable health insurance”

72% of voters support accepting the return of federal dollars to Utah to assist with health care

70% of voters prefer Healthy Utah over Medicaid expansion (which would expand the government program to cover the same population)

Though AARP Utah favors full Medicaid expansion, the poll findings were encouraging that the vast majority of those surveyed do **not** want the status quo of no action on Medicaid, which would leave thousands of people in a gap without access to affordable health care coverage. This poll will serve as a tool for state lawmakers to show the broad and strong public support for action on covering those who fall into the gap.

In addition to AARP Utah, the poll was sponsored by the American Cancer Association/Cancer Action Network, the Association for Utah Community Health, the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, the Utah Health Policy Project, the Utah Hospital Association, and Voices for Utah Children.

The poll of 623 Utah voters was conducted through telephone interviews and online surveys by Dan Jones & Associates in May and June of 2014.

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