

Taking Idaho's Health Care Destiny into Our Own Hands

By Keith Allred
Candidate for Governor 2010
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In recent weeks, both our federal and state governments have passed new laws regarding health care. Neither of them address our health care problems effectively. Today, I want to tell the people of Idaho that a more promising direction is still available to us.

The Problem

First, let's define the problem. Every year, Idahoans' health care costs more and more while becoming less and less accessible. Whether we're Republican, Democrat, or independent, most of us agree that we can't just go on this way.

An Idaho Solution

Governor Otter complains that the federal government is imposing its solution to the health care problem on us. I understand and share this frustration. But the only thing he's done is sign a bill that means we'll spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on the hope that federal judges will tell the federal government that their solution is unconstitutional.

Most experts give the lawsuit little chance of success. And I haven't found anyone who thinks that it will solve the health care problem. Attorneys will go to court, and Idahoans' health care will continue to become more expensive and less accessible. Governor Otter's action won't do anything to solve the problem.

I prefer finding solutions. Governor Otter's focus on lawsuits overlooks an important provision in the federal legislation. States can get a waiver from the federal requirements if they establish alternative programs that control costs and increase access better than the federal legislation itself (see Sec. 1321 and Sec. 1332).

I'm here today to tell you that when I'm elected governor, I'll work to do just that.

I believe that Idaho can do better than the federal government. I know that we can solve the problem better than lawyers and federal judges.

Following Founding Principles of Our Nation as a Guide

In finding an Idaho solution, I'll follow the founding principles of our nation. First, states are the laboratories of democracy. As the 10th Amendment makes clear, most policy-and I would argue that this includes our health care policy-is best reserved to the states.

Second, the surest path to finding a wise state solution is to follow the founders' insight that broad and diverse support is one of the best indicators of policy that will actually make citizens' lives better. Neither the federal nor the Idaho health care law gained broad and diverse support. Both passed with

the support of only one party and not even all the members of that party.

Taking Our Destiny into Our Own Hands

In Idaho, we have a strong tradition of taking our destiny into our own hands. With the leadership of Governor Kempthorne, we chose to solve our water problems ourselves rather than have a solution imposed on us by judges in the Snake River Basin Adjudication. With the leadership of Governor Risch, we chose to get out from under the federal roadless rule by crafting our own.

In the 2010 election, we will choose a governor to work on our health care challenges. This is a real choice. Governor Otter will entrust the job to federal judges. I won't. I'll honor our tradition of taking our destiny into our own hands by offering the leadership needed to implement a state solution. That is the path more likely to control the costs and increase the accessibility of health care.