

Poll: Idaho voters want lawmakers to reject Obamacare

By Wayne Hoffman/Idaho Freedom Foundation

For the next several months, I expect Obamacare to dominate public policy discussions both nationally and on a state level. Regardless of the outcome of the November election, state lawmakers will still be faced with two questions:

First, should the state implement a health insurance exchange as part of the president's health care overhaul?

Second, should the state expand Medicaid to include more affluent people than under the current program that generally provides health coverage for the poor and disabled?

These aren't just public policy questions for lawmakers; these are questions for every day Idahoans whose legislators will be asked in January to implement Obamacare. So we wanted to know what the public thinks—of Obamacare generally and of the implantation of the law specifically.

In a public opinion poll conducted at the end of August, we asked 600 Idaho registered voters whether the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling upholding the health care law was "good for the country." A mere 23 percent of respondents said "yes" while 61 percent said "no."

The next question asked whether Idaho should create a state health insurance exchange or if the Legislature should continue to pursue free market alternatives, including those that allow for health insurance to be bought and sold across state lines—now prohibited by state law. Only 18 percent of respondents said that Idaho lawmakers should pursue a state health insurance exchange. Almost 64 percent responded that they prefer the Legislature to pursue free market options.

Similar responses came when respondents were asked if the state should expand Medicaid to cover those people who, perhaps, are already receiving some form of welfare assistance from the state. Idahoans remained unmoved. Almost 27 percent said the state should expand Medicaid, as allowed through Obamacare. But close to 64 percent said lawmakers should reject expansion of the federal program.

Our polling also showed that opposition to big government health care crossed party lines. Close to half of Democrats favored a state health insurance exchange, but 29 percent preferred to see the Legislature turn to free market reforms. An overwhelming 83 percent of Republicans want lawmakers to reject the state health insurance exchange.

On the other hand, Democrats support expanding Medicaid, according to the poll, with 67 percent supporting the bigger federal-state partnership. About 87 percent of Republicans want the Legislature to turn down the Medicaid expansion. A majority of independent voters—57 percent—oppose a Medicaid expansion.

There is no question in that our health care system is broken. Since the 1930s, Americans have piled government on top of more government in order to help fix the health care system. None of those fixes have worked. None. And now, Idaho lawmakers are told they face the ultimate Hobson's Choice(offering a "free choice" when only one option is offered): Enact Obamacare or let the federal government enact it for us.

There is, in fact, a third option: Enact free market reforms. Get rid of those marketplace barriers that exist as a result of government action. Get rid of unnecessary, costly and cumbersome government bureaucracy. Allow innovation and charitable care and to return to the marketplace and work.

State lawmakers have it in their power to oppose Obamacare and support the free market, and clearly, Idaho voters will support them for doing so.