

OUR VIEW Doc Otter must act or feds will grab his patient

Lee Rozen/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

We are hoping to see an announcement from Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter later this week that the state intends to do everything it can to create a state-based health insurance exchange within the bounds of Obamacare.

That was the recommendation last week from a group he appointed to study the matter, make a recommendation and, in so doing, give him some political cover from the far right ideologues that abound in the Legislature.

One such, Wayne Hoffman of the Idaho Freedom Foundation was on the panel and one of its two negative votes.

Creating such an exchange, given the experience in other states, is neither simple nor easy, if done well. Getting started as soon as possible is advisable.

The alternative, doing nothing and waiting to see whether Mitt Romney is elected and whether he can dismantle Obamacare, is absurd.

Even if Romney is elected, he will find it more difficult to unwind Obamacare than his simplistic campaign rhetoric on the matter would have you believe.

So, Idaho had best begin. There are deadline dates to meet. Action needs to be taken, if not completed, by those dates.

Otherwise, Idaho will be offered a one-size fits all health exchange developed at the national level by federal officials.

That's what makes Hoffman's argument so silly. Adopting a state exchange simply invites more "federal tyranny," he expounds.

Yet it's clear that it is doing nothing that will result, in fact, in federal management of Idaho's insurance market for the uninsured.

It's not that Idaho's health issues are so dramatically different than any other state. It's that the insurance companies now underwriting policies here could well be shut out.

Insurers such as Blue Cross of Idaho, Regence Blue Shield and PacificSource have spent tens of thousands of dollars lobbying the state to create an exchange.

While it would be a stretch to say that these are beloved companies, at least they are relatively local. Disputes with them don't end up going to Stockton or Cleveland or Orlando. Local brokers are used to dealing with them.

If more competition is wanted, the state could invite in health insurance companies from Washington or Oregon.

Doc Otter needs to start prepping for reconstructive political surgery.