

Idaho Statesman Blog, Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2012 – Opinion by Kevin Richert

St. Luke's CEO argues for health exchange: 'Let's not cut off our nose to spite our face'

David Pate, president and CEO of St. Luke's Health System, will have his chance to make his case Thursday for a state-run health insurance exchange. He's a scheduled speaker at the Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce's annual luncheon for legislators — and the exchange is this year's topic.

In a blog post today, Pate argued for the exchange, which is designed to help small businesses and individuals shop for insurance.

“ I think Gov. (Butch) Otter has it right on this issue. If we are going to have an exchange, it should be run by the state. ...

“If the (federal health care) law is struck down in its entirety, we can always decide to abandon the exchange and return the funds to the federal government or move forward with an exchange unfettered by the health reform law.

“On the other hand, inaction on our part will result in loss of control of our destiny if the law is upheld. Let's not cut off our nose to spite our face.”

Otter and business groups back the exchange. Some legislators object to establishing the exchange and accepting a \$20.3 million grant from the federal health care law, preferring to wait on a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the federal law,