

**Idaho Statesman, Thursday, Jan. 26, 2012 – by Audrey Dutton**

## **Otter says don't bet on a health insurance exchange**

Gov. Butch Otter told reporters Wednesday that he doubts Idaho can meet a 2013 deadline to create its own health insurance exchange. "The chances are very good that we are not going to have a state-based exchange" before Jan. 1, 2013, when state-run exchanges must be certified by the federal government.

If Idaho doesn't create its own exchange, it will default to a federal one. All exchanges nationwide are required to take effect in January 2014 under the 2010 federal health care law.

An exchange is a marketplace where people can buy insurance and compare plans.

Idaho has asked the federal government for an extension of the Jan. 1, 2013 deadline, but has not yet received a response, Otter said.

Some lawmakers and business groups, including the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry and the Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce, have backed an Idaho exchange over a federal one. Some worry a federal exchange will minimize Idaho's needs and the state's insurance industry.

Otter said the political environment around the 2010 health care law makes it so that "there's not a whole lot we can do." That environment includes an election year and a Supreme Court challenge to the law that won't be settled until at least late June, he said.

Otter made the remarks at an Idaho Press Club forum.