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## Compromise on indigent health care bill goes to the Senate floor

BOISE - A compromise bill that tries to address the soaring cost of indigent health care advanced to the Senate floor Monday.

Counties - and county taxpayers - are required to pay a portion of the health care costs for people who can't otherwise afford treatment. Currently, they're responsible for \$10,000 per patient per year; the state picks up anything more than that amount.

Earlier this session, Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter recommended raising the "deductible" to \$15,000 per year, thereby shifting about \$6 million in annual costs from the state to local counties and taxpayers.

Sen. Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, introduced a compromise bill that would raise the deductible to \$11,000 per year, saving the state an estimated \$1 million.

Unlike the governor's recommendation, however, Cameron's bill includes several other changes that could help reduce the cost of indigent health care over the long term, or at least slow the growth in those costs. For example, it creates a community based system to try and ensure diabetics and other patients maintain their medication treatment, to cut down on emergency room visits. It also puts in place a system to check Medicaid eligibility before treatment is approved, to help reduce conflicts between counties and health care providers.

"This isn't the complete solution, but we tried to address some cost-saving measures while maintaining the current system (of indigent health care)," Cameron said, during a hearing before the Senate Health and Welfare Committee Monday.

Cameron's bill was supported by the Idaho Association of Counties, the Idaho Medical Association and the Idaho Primary Care Association. The committee sent it on to the full Senate with a unanimous do-pass recommendation.