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Senate Panel Approves New Bill on Health Care Act

Measure Gets Republican Approval, No Democrats

The House State Affairs Committee approved a new version of a bill to cancel out some optional provisions of the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).

The measure passed the committee on a 15-3 party-line vote, with Republicans supporting and Democrats opposing.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Vito Barbieri, R-Dalton Gardens, would prevent any discretionary provisions within the PPACA from being enacted in the Gem State. The legislation defines discretionary as a programs that could be implemented prior to July 1, 2012.

The measure would prevent state agencies from entering agreements stemming from the PPACA with the federal government. Agencies would also not be allowed to accept federal money from health reforms. State departments could still implement parts of the PPACA if they show that it is required by the act.

The new measure does not challenge the authority or legality of the PPACA.

The bill would also give legal protection to Idaho employers and says that they have the option to offer health insurance to employees.

Wayne Hoffman, head of the Idaho Freedom Foundation, said that it is unfair that more than 20 states have filed legal challenges over the PPACA and are simultaneously being forced to implement the law. "We have a law that is on dubious grounds," said Hoffman.

Rep. Phylis King, D-Boise, asked Barbieri what happens if legal challenges to the PPACA fail and the state is behind in implementing health reform provisions. Barbieri said that it's not delaying implementation, but rather protecting citizens and businesses. "I submit that this is the will of the people."

King said that Barbieri's bill is misguided because she feels the PPACA is helpful to Gem State citizens and businesses. "I think it would be good for Idaho," King said. Barbieri told *IdahoReporter.com* that the new bill has been toned down to help it gain passage through the Idaho Senate. The Senate State Affairs Committee killed a stronger measure a few weeks ago on the belief that the state has no right to challenge the constitutionality of federal legislation with state code. There is no direct indication of how the measure might fare in the Senate, but Senate Majority Leader Bart Davis, R-Idaho Falls, has said he supports the new plan.