

# IMPulse

Intermountain Media Pulse

A TRUETONE INCORPORATED COMPANY

**news  
CLIP**

11623 Lake Shore  
Nampa, ID 83686  
(208) 880-9814

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

**Idaho Press**

Nampa, Idaho

**Wednesday July 4, 2018**

**by Betsy Z. Russell**

Page 1 of 3

## Rep. Perry to co-chair Medicaid expansion campaign

Nampa GOP Rep. Christy Perry will co-chair the campaign for a November ballot initiative to expand Medicaid to cover thousands of Idahoans who now fall into a coverage gap.

“I am super excited about having the public be able to weigh in on it,” Perry said. “I think it’s a great bipartisan effort.”

Perry will co-chair the campaign with Emily Strizich, a grassroots progressive activist from Moscow and a leader with Reclaim Idaho, the group that mobilized volunteers to collect signatures to get the measure on the ballot.

Organizers say they believe they’ve gathered enough signatures to put the measure before voters in November; they’ll deliver their verified petitions to Idaho Secretary of State Lawrence Denney on Friday morning. He’ll then review the filings to give the final word on whether it’ll be on the November ballot.

Perry, a Republican who co-owns a gun store, took a high-profile stand during this year’s legislative session in favor of a full House vote on a compromise proposal from Gov. Butch Otter, which would have covered about 35,000 of the 62,000 Idahoans who now fall into the coverage gap, largely by making them eligible for subsidized insurance through the state exchange, while shifting some other high-cost, very ill patients from the exchange to Medicaid. Despite twice being voted out of committee, the bill never came to a vote in the House.

“Like a lot of legislators, I’ve had my frustrations with being unable to move that ball forward in the legislative arena,” Perry told the Idaho Press. “So I had been watching this kind of grass-roots effort going on across the state with some great interest.

“I was really hoping they were going to be able to gather those signatures and get it done. When they did, I was very excited.”

Expanding Medicaid in Idaho under the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, as 32 other states have done, would cover the up to 62,000 Idahoans who now fall into a coverage gap — they make too much to qualify for Idaho’s limited Medicaid program, but not enough to qualify to purchase subsidized health insurance through the Your Health Idaho state insurance exchange.

If Idaho expanded Medicaid to cover that group, the federal government would cover 90 percent of the cost, using tax money that Idahoans already are paying.

However, state lawmakers have been resistant to the idea for the past six years, despite multiple recommendations from task forces convened by GOP Gov. Butch Otter, saying they wanted no further involvement with Obamacare after the creation of the state insurance exchange. Some also opposed accepting the federal money.

# IMPulse

Intermountain Media Pulse

A TRUETONE INCORPORATED COMPANY

**news  
CLIP**

11623 Lake Shore  
Nampa, ID 83686  
(208) 880-9814

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

**Idaho Press**

Nampa, Idaho

**Wednesday July 4, 2018**

**by Betsy Z. Russell**

Page 2 of 3

Reclaim Idaho, co-founded by Strizich, her husband Garrett, a medical student, and Sandpoint resident Luke Mayville, launched a grassroots campaign over the past year in which they drove the state in a green-painted converted RV to spread the word about the need to close the coverage gap. The group's volunteers successfully collected an estimated 54,000 verified signatures from Idaho voters to place the measure on the ballot; a national nonprofit, the Fairness Project, collected another 19,000 valid signatures, using paid signature gatherers in four Idaho counties.

Strizich, a pediatric occupational therapist, said, "I work in health care in rural Idaho, which absolutely informs my perspective about why it's so important to increase access around the state for folks." She said she works with children with disabilities and often finds that the children's parents have no coverage — creating familywide problems, particularly when a parent suffers from mental health issues or chronic disease. "It really becomes difficult to help the child get better if they have that kind of instability in their homes," she said.

From traveling the state gathering signatures, Strizich said she learned "there's this growing, desperate need in our state and a really common-sense solution."

Perry, a fourth-term state representative and current chair of the House Local Government Committee who ran unsuccessfully for the 1st District congressional seat in a crowded GOP primary in May, said, "I know when I ran for Congress, this was a conversation that came up one-on-one all the time."

Perry said toward the end of her campaign, she called more than 1,500 Republican voters. "A majority of the Republicans that I called, that issue came up — they wanted to know where I was on it," she said. "And we know that polling has showed that the majority of Republicans as well as Democrats and independents support this measure — regardless of what the Legislature has done or what politics have been played."

In the 2017 Boise State University Public Policy Survey, three-quarters of Idahoans polled supported closing the state's coverage gap.

Last weekend, the Idaho Republican Party, at its state party convention in Pocatello, adopted a resolution proposed by its nominee for lieutenant governor, Janice McGeachin, opposing the Medicaid expansion initiative. The party's nominee for governor, Brad Little, however, hasn't taken a position on the initiative, saying he'll respect the will of the voters.

Perry, who didn't attend the state party convention this year but has attended as a delegate in the past, said, "We already know that politics has kind of gotten in the way of this measure to begin with, so I'm not surprised that they did that. But I don't think that's going to play out for the public. I don't think the public wants to play politics when it comes to their friends' and neighbors' health care."

Perry said, "Expanding and putting these people on Medicaid actually will make a huge positive fiscal impact for our state. It will free up funds at a local level, at our city and county levels, that are now obviously paying for indigent care through our catastrophic fund."

# IMPulse

Intermountain Media Pulse

A TRUETONE INCORPORATED COMPANY

**news  
CLIP**

11623 Lake Shore  
Nampa, ID 83686  
(208) 880-9814

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

**Idaho Press**

Nampa, Idaho

**Wednesday July 4, 2018**

**by Betsy Z. Russell**

Page 3 of 3

Plus, she said, “We all know that when bills are not being paid, that that cost is being absorbed by everybody else, through the cost of their hospital bills, which then manifests itself in our insurance premiums. So we need to get our premiums under control, and we need to get our health care costs under control. And I believe this is the fiscally responsible way to do so.”

###

Copyright 2018 Idaho Press