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FOR YOUR INFORMATION
The Idaho Statesman
Boise, Idaho
Thursday July 5, 2018
**by Christy Perry &
Emily Strizich**
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GUEST OPINION: Now, it's the voters' turn: Put politics aside and help Idahoans get health care

For far too long, we've watched while 62,000 Idahoans slipped through the cracks in our health care system.

We've expressed heartache for families who've been forced to choose between putting food on the table and life-saving medicine, and we've shared our outrage when Idahoans have passed away without the care they needed. When it comes to delivering solutions, though, we've fallen short year after year. Politics has always seemed to get in the way.

Until now.

The two of us — from opposite ends of the political spectrum — represent the broad, bipartisan support mobilizing behind a ballot initiative that could solve this problem once and for all, and it's why we've decided to co-chair Idahoans for Healthcare together.

We've tried to pass laws to close the "coverage gap" for working single parents, near retirees, rural residents and all other hardworking Idahoans who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid and too little to be eligible for tax credits on the state's health insurance exchange.

Now, it's the voters' turn.

Our ballot measure is simple. It allows Idahoans who earn less than \$17,000 a year to get health care through Medicaid and ensures that families in the coverage gap will have access to essential health care like cancer treatments and heart medication. It's a popular approach, earning support from two out of every three Idahoans, including majority support from Republicans, Independents and Democrats alike.

The two of us come from very different political backgrounds, but like so many other Idahoans, we can agree on this solution.

In addition to delivering health care to 62,000 Idahoans, this initiative will bring hundreds of millions of federal dollars back to our state every year from Washington, D.C. — money that is already set aside for Idaho but is currently going to 33 other states instead. We believe it's time to bring our tax dollars home to help Idahoans, create jobs and boost our economy.

Helping people get health care and bringing our tax dollars home to Idaho isn't a liberal or conservative idea, and neither is making our health care system more efficient. It's just good, old-fashioned common sense.

We've been overwhelmed by the passion and commitment of volunteers who've gone door-to-door to collect the signatures needed to get this on the ballot. That work has been awe-inspiring, and the support from doctors, nurses and the business community has been amazing.

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At the same time, we know much more work remains, which is why Idahoans for Healthcare was formed, and it's why we are kicking off the next phase of our campaign at the state Capitol at 10 a.m. on July 6.

This is our chance to put partisan politics aside and do what's right for people in our state. We hope you'll join us this week as we rally support for the Medicaid initiative, turn in more than 70,000 signatures and send a strong message about the need to close the coverage gap once and for all.

After many years, it's time for the last chapter in this fight to begin.

Christy Perry is a Republican state representative from Nampa's District 11. Emily Strizich is a grass-roots activist from Moscow and a leader with Reclaim Idaho.

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