



Idaho Insurance News

Idaho Department of Insurance
Volume 16 No. 1
Spring 2012

C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor

William W. Deal
Director

Tricia R. Carney
Public Information Specialist

Cheryl Charlton
Graphic Design Specialist

700 West State Street
Third Floor
Boise, Idaho 83720

Phone: 208-334-4250
Fax: 208-334-4398

Comments regarding contents of *Idaho Insurance News* are always welcome

[Calendar of Events](#)

Idaho's Efforts for a State-Based Health Insurance Exchange *Bill Deal*



I have received several inquiries about the status of an Idaho health insurance exchange since the Idaho Legislature adjourned last month. A brief review of the last eighteen months of planning leading up to the 2012 legislative session may help in answering the question.

The Departments of Insurance and Health and Welfare had two goals in planning for an exchange:

1. Design a mechanism for organizing a "one stop shop" to help Idaho citizens and small business owners shop for coverage in a way that permits easy comparison of all available options based on benefits, services, price and quality.
2. Preserve the opportunity for legislators and Idaho citizens to discuss our options and decide what is the best exchange plan for Idaho.

I believe we achieved these goals. Staff members from the DOI and DHW, along with program managers, insurance company managers, business association executives and Idaho citizens worked for about seven months drafting implementation legislation for an Idaho exchange. This was legislation agreed upon by business owners, citizens and industry and was presented to the House of Representatives during the second week of the session.

Accompanying the exchange legislation was the award of an HHS grant for \$20.3 million to be used to begin implementation of an Idaho health insurance exchange. This exchange implementation was assigned to the House of Representatives Health and Welfare Committee. Usually insurance legislation is assigned to the House Business Committee.

An exchange plan developed by the interested parties and further refined by legislators for a state-run exchange did not receive support and was essentially dead on arrival in the House Health and Welfare Committee in that it was not printed in bill format and did not receive a committee hearing. Nonetheless, our exchange implementation legislation was not given a committee hearing. The Affordable Care Act directs states to create their own exchange or, upon a state's failure to do so as in Idaho's case, default to the federally-facilitated exchange.

The next step is determining if the Affordable Care Act is constitutional. That step has been taken by the U.S. Supreme Court when the justices heard the case for more than six hours on March 26, 27 and 28. The three day hearing was precedent-setting because most all Supreme Court hearings last just one hour. The exchange issue is on a holding pattern, waiting for the Supreme Court Justices' decision which is expected in June 2012.

The decision will likely be whether the Affordable Care Act as a whole and including the individual mandate that is closely tied to an exchange is or is not constitutional. Once this decision is made, Idaho will then know more and be in a better position to make its own decision on the health insurance delivery system for our state.

[Back](#)