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Universal Healthcare Expert to Visit Oregon, Tout Single Payer Plan

Efforts are underway in Colorado and Oregon for universal healthcare.

by Shelby Sebens for *The Lunc Report*, July 21, 2015

T.R Reid is hoping that Colorado is the first state in the nation to provide a healthcare system that covers everyone. But he'd still be happy if Oregon got there first.

"Some state has to get this going and prove that it will work and then it will spread," Reid said.

An author and chairman of the Colorado Foundation for Universal Health Care, Reid will be in Oregon this weekend touting healthcare for all. Advocates in Colorado will put a measure on the 2016 ballot. Though the Affordable Care Act, better known as Obamacare, was intended to get every American insured, the Congressional Budget Office predicts 31 million people will still be uninsured as of 2025.

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"The Obamacare solution doesn't get us there," said Reid, who has traveled the world studying universal healthcare in other countries. "It's a national disgrace that we would have 31 million people uninsured in the world's richest country."

Reid said he thinks the way to universal coverage in the United States is through state initiatives.

"Congress can't do this. This is a proven route to universal coverage," he said of states adopting it first.

Efforts have been underway toward universal healthcare in Oregon for years and advocates say it's gaining momentum though most universal healthcare bills that have made their way to hearings in the legislature have yet to pass.

"Each time that the state single payer bill is submitted to the legislature it gets more attention, more support and it becomes more viable," said Dr. Samuel Metz, a member of Oregon Physicians for a National Health Program.

A bill on its way to Governor Kate Brown's desk would fund a study that will look at methods for financing universal healthcare, Metz said. "The study in Oregon is necessary but not sufficient. It's a first step but it doesn't guarantee that the legislature will take action.

Colorado's Purple Plan

Reid thinks universal healthcare has a good shot in Colorado because of the state's political Make up, divided evenly between Democrats and Republicans. He intends to appeal to Democrats as a way to insure everyone and save money and to Republicans as a way to get out of Obamacare. An opt out clause in the Affordable Care Act allows states to get out of the federal mandates while still receiving Medicaid dollars if they can insure people another way,

Reid said.

“That’s why I think we can pass it,” said Reid who expects a fight from insurance companies. He argues the private market can still offer supplemental insurance as well as private insurance for those that don’t want a state run plan similar to parents paying to send their children to private schools.

The Colorado plan would add a 3.3 percent state income tax. Employers would also have to pay into the plan. Reid said studies showed Colorado families typically pay 8 percent of their salaries on healthcare.

Oregon’s efforts

Metz thinks Oregon is uniquely poised to push forward on universal healthcare because many insurance companies are non-profit and might benefit under a universal healthcare plan.

“They would thrive in this new business environment. We don’t see this in other states.”

Reid said Colorado is a little more ahead of the game, with its universal healthcare study completed and a ballot measure ready to go.

“We beat you to marijuana and we’ll beat you to universal healthcare,” he quipped.

Here are the events featuring T.R. Reid:

- July 24th, Friday Noon, Collaborative Life Sciences Building, OHSU, 2730 SW Moody, South Waterfront, Portland. Open to PSU and OHSU students.
- July 24th, Friday 6:00 pm in Portland: Health Care for All Oregon fundraiser with Mr. Reid as the featured guest. Please contact Terry Rogers at (503) 756-4273 or ibuterry@gmail.com for more details.
- July 25th, Saturday 12:00 pm in Salem: “Obamacare: Is it the answer?” Presentation by Mr. Reid to the Salem City Club followed by discussion. Creekside Room, Building D, Salem Hospital Campus, 890 Oak Street SE, Salem. Details will be available at <http://salemcityclub.com/page-953771>
- July 25th, Saturday 7:00 pm at the Russell Tripp Theater, Linn-Benton Community College, Albany: Presentation by Mr. Reid followed by discussion: “Our Costly and Troubled Sick Care System: U.S. Health Care, What to Do About It.”
- July 27th, Monday 6:00 pm at the Multnomah County Building, 501 SE Hawthorne, Portland, Board meeting room: Presentation by Mr. Reid followed by discussion: “Universal Health Care: Why Oregon Won’t Be First.” No charge. Registration is encouraged (http://www.pdxcityclub.org/calendar_day.asp?date=7/27/2015&event=294). This event is hosted by the City Club of Portland, Health Care Member-Led Forum. Mr. Reid will be introduced by Mike Marshall, executive director of the Portland City Club.

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