



Tennesseans rally against state Obamacare exchange

By: MICHAEL PATRICK LEAHY - December 6th 2012

An estimated crowd of 500 Tennesseans rallied Wednesday afternoon at the State Capitol Legislative Plaza in Nashville to profess to Republican Governor Bill Haslam that they opposed the establishment of a state-operated health insurance exchange.

Local talk radio host Ralph Bristol told the enthusiastic crowd, "Tennesseans don't want the governor to become President Obama's store manager."

Several state legislators, including Republicans Bill Ketron, Joe Carr, and newly-elected Courtney Rogers, spoke of their opposition to the establishment of a state health insurance exchange in Tennessee.

Ketron told the crowd "this act is wrong for me, it's wrong for you, and it's wrong for Tennessee."

Nashville Tea Party founder Ben Cunningham told a video crew from The Tennessean: "We believe Obamacare will make health care less affordable, less available. We just don't believe the state should take part in this."

The deadline for Haslam to decide whether or not the state of Tennessee will implement a statewide health insurance exchange was extended until December 14 by the Department of Health and Human Services. If the state of Tennessee doesn't operate an exchange for Tennessee residents, then it will become the responsibility of the federal government under the terms of the 2010 Affordable Health Care Act, known more commonly as Obamacare.

The Cato Institute's Michael Cannon has argued that the language of the law actually voids its applicability to residents of any state that chooses not to implement a state operated health insurance exchange.

Sally Pipes, President of the Pacific Research Institute, and Hal Scherz, a urologist, bolster Cannon's argument, noting, "The text of the law stipulates that only state-based exchanges -- not federally run ones -- may distribute credits and subsidies."

While Governor Haslam has not publicly announced support for a statewide exchange, most Tennessee political observers believe he may be waiting for political opposition to

die down. To date, fifteen Republican governors have decided not to implement statewide health insurance exchanges.