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Control of Texas' health care system would revert to state under proposal from Rep. Lois Kolkhorst challenging Obamacare

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By Mark Lisher

[Rep. Lois Kolkhorst](#) ^[1] has filed a bill asking that Texas join other states in wresting control of their health care systems from the federal government.

In [House Bill 5](#) ^[2] by [Kolkhorst](#) ^[3], R-Brenham, Texas becomes the eighth state in which legislators are using Constitutional grounds to form interstate health care compacts that would supersede the authority of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to determine how states run their health care programs.

Within the past week lawmakers in Georgia and Colorado filed similar bills. Arizona, Montana, North Dakota and Tennessee followed Missouri's lead in calling for legislative support for compact agreements.

"For too long, we've watched the federal government struggle to control how public health care assistance is delivered," Kolkhorst said in a release issued today. "Forming a compact with fellow states will bring decisions closer to home. There's a feeling that states will be the best innovators of health care reform, especially if President Obama's Affordable Care Act continues to be found unconstitutional by the courts."

Kolkhorst's bill asks that the federal government fund its portion of health care in Texas through a block grant free of the mandates for how the money is spent.

"One of the major priorities of the bill is to seek a block grant from the federal government so that our state can better predict costs and can better serve the people who rely on public health services," she said.

At the end of January, [Rep. Tryon Lewis](#) ^[4], R-Odessa, filed [House Bill 1008](#) ^[5] that applied the same interstate compact principles solely to Medicaid, the insurance program for the poor. At the time, Lewis told the [Washington Times](#) ^[6] he filed the bill in the hopes that states would join together to force the federal government to acknowledge that change was necessary.

"If that many partners come to them and say we can't pay for this anymore, we've got to change, I think the likelihood is high that something could be done," Lewis said, "because otherwise the states may have to say we can't [afford Medicaid], because we can't, and then all the burden would go on the federal government."

A 170 percent increase in the cost of Medicaid since 2000 in Texas was a chief impetus for the compact bill, according to Kolkhorst. The largest public health care program in the state is on its way to overwhelming the entire state budget, according to [a study done by the Cato Institute](#) ^[7] for the conservative Texas Public Policy Foundation.

Arlene Wohlgemuth, director of the Foundation's Center for Health Care Policy, who has been advocating in this legislative session for free market alternatives in health care, said today the health care compact is her priority for Texas.

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URLs in this post:

- [1] Rep. Lois Kolkhorst: http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Lois_Kolkhorst
- [2] House Bill 5: <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/Search/DocViewer.aspx?K2DocKey=odbc%3a%2f%2fTLO%2fTLO.dbo.vwCurrBillDocs%2f82%2fR%2fH%2fB%2f00005%2f1%2fB%40TloCurrBillDocs&QueryText=interstate+health+care+compact&HighlightType=1>
- [3] Kolkhorst: <http://www.house.state.tx.us/members/member-page/?district=13>
- [4] Rep. Tryon Lewis: <http://www.house.state.tx.us/members/member-page/?district=81>
- [5] House Bill 1008: <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/82R/billtext/pdf/HB01008I.pdf#navpanes=0>
- [6] Washington Times : <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/feb/27/state-compacts-on-health-care-eyed-as-end-run-arou/?page=3>
- [7] a study done by the Cato Institute: <http://www.texaswatchdog.org/2011/01/policy-group-estimates-health-care-reform-adds-31-billion-to-Texas-Medicaid/1294263466.column>
- [8] Read More : <http://www.texaswatchdog.org/2011/03/control-of-texas-health-care-system-would-revert-to-state-obamacare-bill/1299622069.column>

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