



Debate is Underway in Tennessee Over Costs of Expanding TennCare

By Blake Farmer March 13, 2013

Opponents of expanding TennCare as envisioned in the Affordable Care Act say the country can't afford to add to the national debt. But hospitals in Tennessee are pushing back, saying the money amounts to just seven-thousandths of one percent of the country's red ink.

Vanderbilt University Medical Center's Wright Pinson held up a sheet of paper with a pin dot in the middle, representing the potential savings for no expansion compared to the country's \$16 trillion debt.

"I think that you would agree that weighing all of the conflicting politics and data, the health and welfare of the citizens of Tennessee far outweigh this dot," Pinson said.

The federal government would cover 100 percent of the costs in the first three years. Pinson says the state should take the money and worry about the future later.

A Tennessee House committee held the first hearings on Medicaid expansion. Two Washington-area think tanks argued against expansion. A representative from the Cato Institute cast doubt on whether the 200,000 additional Tennesseans who would be covered are really uninsured now.