

Gov. Scott: We Will Begin Working Immediately on a Budget to Continue Critical Programs & Start Conversation on Healthcare Access and Cost

On April 30, 2015, in News Releases, by Currie Dickerson

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Governor Rick Scott released the following statement today upon the adjournment of the Florida Senate upon the call of the President, and after the Tuesday adjournment of the Florida House:

“Now that the Florida Senate and House have adjourned, we must immediately turn our focus to how we can work together to craft a state budget before July 1st that continues funding for critical state services. There were no discussions about Medicaid expansion under Obamacare before the legislative session began. Today, it is clear that a thorough analysis of how healthcare can be reformed to improve cost, quality and access is needed, apart from the budget process.

“Our previous state Medicaid reform efforts took months of thoughtful debate in order to not only develop the best policy with the most flexibility for our citizens, but to ensure we designed something that the federal government would ultimately approve. Any conversation on new healthcare or Medicaid reforms should be similarly deliberated.

“It is important to note that we still do not have any evidence that the federal government would approve work requirements for the Medicaid program. However, there are other ideas we could begin to explore to increase access to healthcare, including having the federal government give the state a 100 percent federally funded block grant to develop a flexible program that meets the unique needs of Florida’s population. The bottom line is that any discussion about how to increase healthcare access cannot and must not be separate from a discussion about how to lower healthcare costs. Cost limits access, no matter who is paying.

“A conversation on new healthcare reforms to lower healthcare costs will ultimately improve healthcare access for those in the Medicaid program and Florida families of all incomes. Putting the cart before the horse by trying to grab the limited-one-time-only offer of so-called ‘free’ money from Obamacare, on the other hand, will cost Florida taxpayers at least \$5 billion over 10 years and could eventually result in the state having to raise taxes to afford the growth of government. Expanding Obamacare in Florida would also further tie us to a federal government that has already walked away from our Low Income Pool healthcare program. The proposed Obamacare expansion plan would also force Floridians who currently have private insurance on the federal exchange into the government-run Medicaid program – causing them to lose the plans they liked and were told they could keep, practically overnight.

“In order to best facilitate a conversation about how to lower healthcare costs that will improve healthcare access for Floridians of all incomes, we will establish a Commission on Healthcare and Hospital Funding. The commission will examine how taxpayer money supports hospitals, healthcare and insurance plans in Florida and what healthcare outcomes those entities provide for Floridians in return. It will also evaluate certificate of need laws in our state and how their elimination would increase competition and subsequently decrease cost. Lowering costs will ultimately lower hospitals’ need for federal dollars, which is a win-win for Florida taxpayers.

“The Commission on Healthcare and Hospital Funding will begin their work in the weeks ahead and gather essential information that could inform the building of a budget before July 1. My office will also immediately begin working with the House and the Senate on a budget that would continue funding for critical Florida programs.

“It is my hope that the Obama administration will officially untie our LIP program from any discussion of an Obamacare expansion by granting us our submitted LIP waiver. However, we should begin preparing a budget in the interim that could be taken up in a special session without any LIP funding and without any expansion of Obamacare. I look forward to continuing to work with Senate and House leaders in the weeks ahead to address critical funding needs and identify when and how we can direct over \$1 billion in surplus state tax revenue back to the Florida citizens who earned it. After all, this is their money – not government’s.”

###