

House health care bills DOA in Senate?

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Questions about the House's health care bills got a lukewarm response Wednesday morning from Senate President Andy Gardiner.

The Senate held a brief floor session but did not conduct any significant business as a state budget for 2015-16 continues to be worked out.

Asked whether the Senate would eventually hear the bills, Gardiner said it would be "the chair's decision," referring to Health Policy committee head Aaron Bean, a Fernandina Beach Republican.

Several health care issues were being "workshopped" Wednesday in Bean's committee, meaning discussion but no votes on bills.

The House is moving several health care measures during the special session, including a bill (HB 31-A) to remove regulation of hospitals that want to expand facilities or services.

"Certainly, the Senate's position is, we have focused on the uninsured," said Gardiner, an Orlando Republican, referring to efforts to expand Medicaid that hammered a wedge between the two chambers earlier this year.

"While (the House bills) may be good ideas, I'm not sure it gets to the uninsured piece," Gardiner said. "But we'll give them their due."

Tuesday night, Bean was asked whether any of the House bills had a chance in the Senate.

"You're talking to the guy that presented FHIX," the acronym for the Florida Health Insurance Affordability Exchange, the Senate's health care expansion that the House defeated last week.

"I'm probably not the guy to ask how the tea leaves are going to go down," he said with a smile. "We'll see."