



# SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Funding for health exchange moving forward in budget committee** *Devlin and Bates point to major health care victories over last two days*

SALEM – Creation of a health care marketplace that will provide 350,000 Oregonians with access to affordable, quality health care took another major step forward Tuesday with an agreement to accept a federal grant that will give Oregon \$48 million to fund the development of a state health insurance exchange.

Two key Democratic Senate budget-writers applauded today's decision to take action on the grant Friday during a meeting of the Full Ways and Means Committee.

"Acceptance of this grant will give Oregon the resources we need to continue making advances as a national leader on healthcare reform," said Senator Alan Bates (D-Medford), co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Human Services and a key leader on healthcare reform. "When it is fully operational in just three years the insurance exchange will help control spiraling costs and make quality, affordable healthcare available to hundreds of thousands of Oregonians."

Tuesday's decision by the co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee follows Monday's bipartisan approval of legislation creating the Oregon Health Insurance Exchange. Senate Bill 99 is headed to the House for consideration.

"In the last two days, the Legislature has taken two major steps forward to address the health care crisis that affects all Oregon families," said Senator Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin), co-chair of the Ways and Means Committee. "Oregon has been given an opportunity by the federal government to set the standard for health care exchanges across the country. This grant allows us to do exactly that without using Oregon's limited resources."

If Oregon does not develop its own health insurance exchange, the federal government will impose a one-size-fits-all version. The Oregon Health Insurance Exchange will work like a central marketplace for health insurance, allowing individuals and small businesses to shop for coverage based on quality, cost, and value. Currently, it is very difficult for most consumers to know what they are getting when looking at health insurance plans. Under Oregon's exchange, set to be operational in 2014, consumers will have "apples-to-apples" comparisons of health plans for the first time.

Consumers will be able to access the plans through a web site or with the assistance of a "navigator," a community-based organization designed to help individuals find the best insurance option for their needs. The Exchange will also be the mechanism for qualified businesses and individuals to access federal tax

credits available in 2014 to help make premiums more affordable.

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