



Mississippi House of Representatives Special Session Summary

June 27, Medicaid Special Session

On Monday, June 24, Governor Phil Bryant called a special session of the Legislature for Thursday, June 27. This is the second extraordinary special session called by Governor Bryant in 2013. This special session was devoted to reauthorizing and refunding the Mississippi Division of Medicaid.

The Legislature ended the 2013 Regular Session without reauthorizing Medicaid or appropriating the funds necessary to run the program after July 1. The existing Medicaid program serves nearly 700,000 of our state's children, aged, blind and disabled citizens, nursing home patients, etc. The sticking point revolved around whether to expand Medicaid to include an additional 300,000 adults ("working poor"), which is optional for states under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare"). Generally, House Democrats wanted a vote to expand Medicaid before the session ended, but House Republicans refused, contending that a debate or vote on expansion at this time would be both premature and imprudent unless and until more information is provided by the Federal government. For technical reasons relating to 3/5 super-majority vote requirements, and also to the fact that some members claim real or perceived ethical conflicts of interest, thereby affecting the total number of votes needed for passage, none of the four separate Medicaid bills brought to the floor passed the House. Neither party budged from its position, and as a result, Medicaid was neither expanded nor extended (or funded) during the Regular Session.

In Governor Bryant's Proclamation issued Monday, he announced only two matters would be discussed: reauthorizing the current Medicaid program and funding the program, unless he submitted additional matters in writing for consideration. Both bills for the Special Session were drafted in the House and would be sent to the Senate once they passed the House floor.

Upon gaveling in at 10 a.m., House Medicaid Chairman Bobby Howell called a meeting of the Medicaid Committee. Committee members met to discuss [House Bill 1](#) (HB1). Enactment of this measure establishes the Division of Medicaid. It does not cover various sections or codes for services. The bill passed out of committee to the House floor with minimal debate. Three amendments were offered on the House floor. One was deemed not relevant to the bill. The two amendments deemed germane were then discussed. Amendment one proposed a state-run health exchange over a federally-run health exchange. The amendment failed. Amendment Three attempted to put a one-year repealer on the bill. A similar amendment was offered in the committee meeting, but failed. Supporters of the one-year repealer believe that as a complex agency Medicaid needs to be readdressed each year. It is a changing program that needs refining and updating on a regular basis. Those opposing the repealer believe repealers will be more relevant in a technical bill that will address the services and codes of the program. An oversight committee has been in place at the Division of Medicaid for years, but has been inactive. Many members want to activate the Medical Care Advisory Committee within Medicaid in



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order to keep the division in check. This amendment also failed. The bill passed by a final bipartisan vote of 96-20.

The Appropriations Committee members then received [House Bill 2](#) (HB2), the funding portion of the Division of Medicaid. HB2 appropriates \$840M for Medicaid, which is a 2.24 percent increase over Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) appropriations. Members voted to pass the bill out of committee to the House floor.

One amendment was offered to HB2. It installed conditional language that the appropriations funds could not be utilized unless a discussion and a vote on Medicaid expansion occur. Passage of the amendment would not set up expansion, but allow a full debate, a matter that stalled the Medicaid legislation from passing in the 2013 Regular Session. Despite the amendment failing, supporters of expansion took this opportunity to speak in its favor. HB2 passed on a bipartisan vote of 114-1.

House members then sent HB1 and HB2 to the Senate for discussion, where they amended HB1 to include the services and programs portion of the Medicaid “Technical” bill. Once House members received the revised bill, they voted overwhelmingly to pass it, 109-4. Supporters believe its passage will continue many vital services for approximately 700,000 Mississippians. It also lifts the freeze on nursing home reimbursement rates, ensures payments to hospitals and doctors, and keeps the healthcare of many Mississippians intact.

This concluded the second extraordinary special session of 2013.