



## Sebelius pushes Walker on federal Medicaid expansion

11/16/2013

MILWAUKEE -- U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today urged Gov. Scott Walker to reverse his decision to turn down federal money to expand Medicaid, even as she praised him for his move to extend BadgerCare coverage by three months.

"There is \$10 billion of federal funding that would come into Wisconsin over the next 10 years if the governor and the Legislature chose to expand Medicaid," Sebelius said. "Ten billion for newly insured folks in Wisconsin to get health care, and frankly, those dollars are now being absorbed by community hospitals paying for uncompensated care, by taxpayers who pay for care of others," she said.

The gov yesterday said he's in favor of allowing people to continue coverage through March 31, the deadline to enroll in health care through the Affordable Care Act.

"Having people take the full advantage of open enrollment, which lasts until the 31st of March, makes sense, so people don't drop through the cracks," she said, citing support for the change from Dems Tammy Baldwin and Tom Barrett.

### WisPolitics audio

- [Sebelius press conference](#)

Sebelius said Wisconsin was once "on its way to run a state-based marketplace and actually was one of the early innovator states" and had "incredible technology builds" started. Then, she said, "the new administration came in and decided they would no longer follow that plan any longer would instead become part of the federal marketplace."

She said she hoped Wisconsin and the 35 other federal marketplace states would create state-based programs. "We'd love to hand over the baton," she said.

Walker spokesman Tom Evenson suggested Sebelius should be more worried about the federal government's failures in the Obamacare rollout than dictating to states what they should do.

"If they spent half as much time attempting to fix their issues with the

Affordable Care Act as they do attempting to place blame, we'd be in a much better position today," Evenson said. "They should focus on fixing their issues and we'll focus on protecting Wisconsin citizens."

Sebelius addressed media at the Progressive Community Health Center clinic on Milwaukee's west side, where clients have experienced frustration about completing enrollment in plans through the federal government's website.

A groundbreaking took place earlier for a new, larger facility to be built next door with partial funds through the ACA. The clinic accepts enrollees in Title 19, Medicare and BadgerCare, and bills patients who have no insurance on a sliding fee basis. It has helped about 300 people try to sign up for health plans on the Obamacare website; of those, more than 200 qualified to apply for Medicaid instead, due to poverty. As of today, 10 people had succeeded in signing up at that location.

Milwaukee County Exec Chris Abele, appearing with Sebelius, praised the collaboration of city agencies, religious organizations and others over the past nine months to help people enroll. "At the end of the day, people are getting enrolled, and that's fantastic," Abele said.

"About 10 percent of Wisconsin residents have no health insurance at all," Sebelius said. "Here in Milwaukee, its about 500,000 people who can come either into the Medicaid or into the marketplace. We know there are people eager to take advantage of that, and we know there are underinsured folks who are eager for comprehensive plans."

Sebelius speculated that many people who have started the process of registering on the website have held off completing the process while they mull numerous options.

Afterward, her press secretary, Fabien Levy, told WisPolitics.com that the possibility of a crush of applications on or near the Dec. 15 deadline has been discussed.

He said the government is sending emails to people who registered to encourage them to make a decision and complete enrollment "in waves" to help avoid a website crash on the final day.

"We're seeing 25,000 to 50,000 people at a time on the website," said Sebelius. "We need to greatly increase that (capacity) by the end of November."

-- *By Kay Nolan*  
*For WisPolitics.com*