Gov. Perry Takes Firm Stance Against Medicaid Expansion

Congressional leaders work to bring needed flexibility for reforms

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

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Thank you all for being here on the First of April.

Seems to me April Fool's Day is the perfect day to discuss something as foolish as Medicaid expansion, and to remind everyone that Texas will not be held hostage by the Obama Administration's attempt to force us into the fool's errand of adding more than a million Texans to a broken system.

That's not just me who said that, by the way, but also the President himself, who called Medicaid a broken system in 2009.

Medicaid expansion is, simply put, a misguided, and ultimately doomed attempt to mask the shortcomings of Obamacare.

Texas was among the first states to say "no."

Today, I stand with Sen. Cornyn, Sen. Cruz, Congressman Barton and Congressman Burgess to repeat our stance, Texas will not participate in Medicaid expansion.

Our decision is based on what is in the best interests of Texans, all Texans, and is one definitive way we can seek to minimize the damage done by the institution of Obamacare.

It would benefit no one in our state to see their taxes skyrocket and our economy crushed, as our budget crumbled under the weight of oppressive Medicaid costs.

Already, Medicaid is responsible for a quarter of our state's budget, and some estimates show that if we accepted expansion that number would jump to nearly a third.

From 1990 to 2010, national Medicaid expenditures rose 445 percent, while over that span the Medicaid caseload increased just 135 percent.

And now we're expected to add millions to that system?

Proponents of expansion insist it's a good deal because the federal government will pick up most of the tab, insisting this is "free" money.

Texans, however, know there is no such thing as "free" money.

We know there's only money that's collected from taxpayers, and money borrowed from other countries like China against the good credit of our children and grandchildren.

We're supposed to take the Obama Administration's word about this funding on face value, but let's remember this is the same administration that recently oversaw the release of thousands of
criminal aliens because they couldn't find the money to deport them.

It was a federally-sponsored jailbreak that betrayed the most fundamental promise any government makes its citizens, the promise to keep them safe.

Some argue we can withdraw from the expansion if, or when, Washington breaks its promise on funding, but experience has shown us that, once in place, these types of entitlements are extremely difficult to scale back.

All this is a hefty price to pay for a system that is, even now, struggling to deal with its caseload.

In Texas, only three out of every ten doctors are accepting new Medicaid patients, and we fear that number may actually decrease if expansion went through.

Texas doesn't need another mandate, but the flexibility to care for our own in a manner that makes sense both effectively and financially.

We need to be able to use tools like asset testing to ensure resources are available to those who truly need it.

We need health savings accounts and cost-sharing initiatives, such as co-pays, deductibles and premium payments on a sliding scale.

We need to give people more control over their health-care spending, and encourage them to take advantage of private coverage and other existing coverage options.

Only then will we be able to truly begin dealing with health care costs.

Expanding Medicaid is not a solution, it's not even a band-aid for what ails us.

In short, it's a prescription for failure, and Texas will not be a part of it.