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## Lt. Gov. Ramsey wants to wait on health care exchange decision

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Reported by Cara Kumari - [email](#)

NASHVILLE, TN (WSMV) - Tennessee has some big decisions to make when it comes to health care reform. A top lawmaker said Thursday he wants to wait until after the elections to deal with Obama's plan.

It's a move health care advocates say could put Tennesseans at risk.

The state needs to decide whether to set up its own health care exchange. It's a big undertaking that something one million Tennesseans would use.

But the lieutenant governor says he doesn't want to make a decision until he knows for sure what the U.S. Supreme Court has to say about the health care law.

Bobby Joslin, of Joslin and Son Signs, has been making signs for 35 years, and providing health insurance to his employees is important to him.

But those costs are skyrocketing, and he fears federal health care reform is going to make it even worse.

"We see this as a job killer. We can't afford to add on employees if we don't know what the costs are going to be with this new 'Obamacare,'" Joslin said.

Under the federal health reform, the state must decide by Jan. 1, 2013 whether to set up its own online marketplace for health insurance or let the federal government do it for them.

Health care advocates were hoping the state legislature would make that decision this session, but some lawmakers aren't so sure.

"Do we have to go into session and set up something and vote for something that we hope never happens," said Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey, R-Blountville.

Ramsey says between the Supreme Court ruling expected next year and the 2012 elections, the health reform could be overturned.

That's why he wants to wait until then to do a special session on health care.

"Maybe one way to address this is to come back after the November elections. We'll know then what the Supreme Court has said, we know what the results are we will have a better idea of what we need to do as a state," Ramsey said.

But health care advocates say delaying decisions could mean the exchange won't be ready in time and would keep one million people from accessing health care, opening them up to federal penalties.

"Any delays by the state legislature is going to cause some speed bumps and unnecessary delays, and we don't need that right now," said Tony Garr, with the Tennessee Health Care Campaign.

Ramsey says he has not floated the idea of a special session to Gov. Bill Haslam or House Speaker Beth Harwell.

He says even if health care reform stays in effect, waiting will give lawmakers more times to learn about the requirements and make smart decisions.

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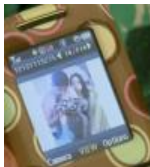
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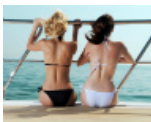
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