

Statement of Governor Steve Bullock
at the Press Conference on Medicaid Expansion
on Friday, April 19, 2013 at 2:45 p.m. in Helena

When you watch the news tonight or pick up a paper tomorrow, there's a good chance that people will be talking about who won and who lost in the legislature today. They'll say that the Republican leadership "won" because they used a procedural trick to stop the will of the majority of legislators. They'll say that those who worked together to find compromise "lost."

But no matter what anyone says, the winners aren't a handful of folks in this building. The real winners are the residents of New Jersey and Arizona who will now get to use Montana taxpayer dollars to improve the care of people in their states, while we get nothing.

And the losers aren't the Democrats and Republicans who worked together and found a workable compromise.

- The losers are the 70,000 Montanans who would have had access to quality, affordable care – but now will be forced to go without.
- The losers are the rural hospitals that are struggling to survive.
- It's our economy that loses when we say "No" to \$10 billion dollars in new economic activity.
- And it's all of us who have health insurance who lose when we foot the bill for the uninsured who can't afford preventative care, and instead end up in the emergency room where we foot the bill for the most expensive care possible.

I've traveled thousands of miles across our state talking about our health care system. And I've met with leaders from hospitals, from major businesses, from Chambers of Commerce. I've talked to doctors from all ends of the political spectrum. I've talked to those who have insurance – who see their rates going up year after year – and I've talked to those who don't have insurance – and are one illness away from medical bankruptcy.

Outside of this building, virtually everyone in our state gets it. Creating jobs, expanding coverage and reforming the way we deliver health care is a good idea.

Ultimately, we're all responsible to our constituents – that's who we work for. And these legislators who voted to send our tax dollars out of state are going to have to go home and tell their bosses that they stood in the way of lower health care costs, they stood in the way of good-paying jobs, and they stood in the way of access to affordable health care for tens of thousands of Montanans who desperately need it.

I'm disappointed that procedural tricks and threats of dark money attacks killed our legislative attempts. To stand up to the "dark money" groups, it takes courageous statesmen and stateswomen. There are some of them in our legislature and I thank them for their efforts. But we need more.

Creating jobs and reforming our health care system are the right things to do and I'm going to keep fighting to do just that. We'll be working with Republicans and Democrats to find a way to expand coverage for more Montanans and to reform the way we deliver care. I look forward to this happening soon. We will get there.