

Sticking it to Obama's health plan

Written by News Desk
Saturday, 07 September 2013 15:27 -



By Bob Martin, Publisher

What does the Executive Branch leader of our state have in mind? More pointedly, what has Gov. Bentley been inhaling?

It takes a real genius to turn down \$1.5 billion-dollars-a-year for three years passed on to us with no strings attached in order to help our poor, underprivileged and elderly who can't afford it receive medical care.

Dr. David Bronner, who heads the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) put it this way in the latest edition of his newsletter: "In the name of St. Peter, for the 300,000 poor Alabama men, women and children, we need to accept the \$4.5 BILLION that Washington is offering for better health care and jobs that will create significant growth. Does Alabama accept billions of dollars from Uncle Sam and create thousands of jobs by expanding Medicaid, or tell that 'bad' federal government to keep 'our' money and send it somewhere else?"

If the state continues to remain in the program after the three years we must then contribute up to ten percent of the costs but those contributions do not reach the full ten percent until 2020, Bronner says.

"For years numerous Alabamians have been operating under the mistaken belief that the federal government takes more from us than it gives back. In truth, study after study has shown

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that for every dollar paid by Alabamians to Washington, \$1.55 to \$1.74 is returned, depending on whether or not military expenditures are included," Bronner wrote.

Bentley has joined some 11 or 12 other governors who also say they will refuse to accept this federal largesse which would, according to researchers at UAB say provide enormous benefits for our state under the Medicaid expansion.

Gov. Bentley is a physician. He, more than the rest of us, should understand what this would do for the people of our state, not to mention the hospitals, some which are operating on a financial cliff.

Speaking recently at the Tuscaloosa Rotary Club, Bronner said the Governor will use the recruitment of Airbus as a key for his re-election campaign. "That is great. It will create 1,000 new jobs. If we can come up with \$360 million in incentives to get Mercedes-Benz and \$180 million in incentives for Airbus, there is no reason why we cannot come up with the money to pick up several billion in federal money."

Bentley's press office did not reply to an email from the News requesting a response to Bronner's remarks.

However, he has refused to expand Medicaid coverage in the state, even under the The Affordable Care Act and even though it would provide health care coverage to thousands of low-income state citizens who are now without such coverage.

Georgia is expected to create more than 60,000 new jobs from its Medicaid expansion. So says Bronner in his most recent newsletter and he concludes that since Alabama has half the population of Georgia, Medicaid expansion could possible generate 35,000 new jobs here which would be the largest influx of new jobs in the state's history. In fact, he said if it only created 10,000 to 15,000 new jobs that would still be the largest ever in the state's history. "Only government has the ability to create jobs on that scale," he adds.

It would also, he concludes, add about \$1.5 billion annually to the state's economy, will

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generate over \$1.7 billion in tax revenue, would create all those new jobs and help over 300,000 women and children in need.

The word I would use to describe the governor's decision with regard to Medicaid begins with an 'I'.

Hope for a resurrection on the Plains

I was a part of the 86,000 at Jordan-Hare Stadium last Saturday night in Auburn to watch what War Eagle fans hope to be a comeback season for the Tigers, who recovering from more miscues than generally allowable, held on to defeat Washington State 31-24.

It was an anxious crowd who watched former top assistant Gus Malzohn make his coaching debut on the Plains.

Meanwhile, a bit further east, in Atlanta, the Crimson Tide easily handled Virginia Tech in a reasonable fashion by 35-10.

So the football season begins on a positive note for both teams with Alabama defending its national title successfully and Auburn giving some hope of a return to greatness or at least establishing a competitive atmosphere.