

[Will WA's Basic Health Plan Survive the Legislature?](#)

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Democrats want to keep it - Republicans have recommended ending it. Once again this year, the Basic Health Plan is a political football in the final weeks of the legislative session.

The state partially subsidizes health coverage for 35,000 low-income Washington residents, with 100,000 more having [Economic Opportunity Institute](#), describes their view.

It's really important that we invest in this through 2013 - and then, the federal government takes over the vast majority of the funding. So, basically, it's sort of building this bridge and ensuring we're able to keep these people covered until the Affordable Care Act can take over. - Tatsuko Go Hollo

The plan's detractors say there's no guarantee that the Affordable Care Act will kick in in 2014 because of the court ch

Washington's Basic Health Plan is only for low-income working adults, who pay their own premiums and some health-related costs. No new people have been enrolled since May 2009 for lack of additional state funding - and more than 157,000 are on the waiting list.

The program has been around for 25 years, but Go Hollo says it's become more important since the recession. Now, employers of four out of ten workers in Washington don't offer health coverage - and statewide, one million people are uninsured.

"As most people would suspect, a big factor in that is the drop in employer-sponsored coverage. So, as people have lost their jobs and health care costs have risen, and employers are no longer paying for coverage for people, we've seen a pretty significant drop."

The Basic Health Plan is a \$44 million investment for the state. Gov. Chris Gregoire cut the program in her budget, then offered a sales tax hike as a way to keep and fund it. The Democrat-controlled House has included Basic Health in its budget at the current funding level; the Republican alternative budget did not. The next move is up to the Senate.

- Chris Thomas