

US extends key deadline of Obama healthcare reform law

November 16 2012

US states will be given additional time to decide whether to put in place a key aspect of President Barack Obama's health care reform program, the administration's top health policy official said Thursday.

In a letter to governors of Louisiana and Virginia, Secretary of Health and Human Services [Kathleen Sebelius](#) said that states now will be given until December 14 to decide whether to put in place their own "state-based exchange"—or online marketplaces—aimed at helping consumers and small businesses shop for healthcare coverage.

She made her announcement one day before the original November 16 deadline.

"While receiving a letter of intent now will help us assist states in finalizing their application, a state may submit both a letter of intent and an application to operate its own exchange by December 14," Sebelius wrote in the letter, a copy of which was obtained by AFP.

If states miss next month's deadline, the federal government will step in and do it from them.

Texas Governor Rick Perry said in a letter to Sebelius on Thursday that his state would not be creating an exchange.

"It is clear there is no such thing as a state exchange," Perry wrote.

"Instead, this is a federally mandated exchange with rules dictated by Washington."

Signed by Obama in March 2010 and upheld by the Supreme Court in June, the [Affordable Care Act](#) law aims to provide [health care coverage](#) to an additional 30 million Americans. States are required to gradually implement it by 2014.

The law bars insurance companies from denying coverage to children with pre-existing conditions, allows parents to keep children on their medical insurance plans until age 26, and prohibits lifetime limits on coverage.

A number of Republican governors, hoping the law would be overturned, dragged their feet as they waited to see whether Obama would win re-election amid promises by his rival, [Mitt Romney](#), to repeal the measure, dubbed "Obamacare" by some.

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