

[Bob Kinzel, VPR News](#)

(Host) Governor Peter Shumlin's plan to implement a single payer health care system in Vermont by 2014 has gotten a big boost.

President Obama told a meeting of the nation's governors that he'll help states get federal waivers so they have more flexibility in designing their own systems.

That waiver is exactly what the Shumlin Administration needs to pursue a single payer system in a timely manner.

VPR's Bob Kinzel reports:

(Kinzel) Under the new federal health care law, states must wait until 2017 before they're allowed to create their own plan to provide comprehensive care at an affordable cost.

Vermont's Congressional delegation has proposed a bill to move this date up to 2014.

At the winter meeting of the National Governors Association, President Obama said he'll support this legislation. That was very good news to Governor Peter Shumlin, who was attending his first NGA meeting.

(Shumlin) "It is incredibly exciting that the President of the United States has agreed to give us the flexibility we need to pass a single payer health care system by 2014...to have the President's backing and support is just huge for Vermont."

(Kinzel) Shumlin says he's convinced that implementing a single payer system in Vermont will be a big help to the state's economy:

(Shumlin) "I've always believed it's feasible I'm an optimist this is a huge jobs creator if we're the first state to get health care costs under control we create jobs there's no question about it and obviously this is a big help."

(Kinzel) Congressman Peter Welch says health care is an issue where individual states can play a very important role.

(Welch) "What we've shown in Vermont is the more you can have the responsibility and authority for implementation at the local level the more confidence citizens will have and the better management you're going to get. So this bill that gives states flexibility gets around the one size fits all and I think the President is very wise to show confidence in the ability of states to take this to the next step."

(Kinzel) Welch says that his legislation could attract strong Republican support because it allows individual states to design their own approach to health care.

(Welch) "It's about letting all states choose the path that's best for them it's not a particular system that they have to agree to and if my Republican friends are serious about states' rights and they are then they should fast track this bill."

(Kinzel) The Vermont Legislature is expected to consider the first phase of Governor Shumlin's health care reform plan in the next few weeks.

For VPR News, I'm Bob Kinzel in Montpelier.