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Web Posted: 08/18/2009 7:00 CDT

Perry on Obamacare: Be afraid.

[By Peggy Fikac](#) - Express-News

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry's message on President Obama's administration initiatives, including health care reform, was simple Tuesday: Be afraid. Be very afraid.

While Perry's critics said Texas' health care system under his leadership is the real fear factor.

Perry at a Texas Capitol news conference contended federal proposals to fix the health system would cost Texas taxpayers “tens of billions of dollars over the next 10 years alone without significantly improving care for Texans.”

Asked about raucous town hall meetings on the topic, Perry said, “Here's the real issue: Americans are scared. I think for the first time in most of our citizens' lives, they're really scared about the future...They are afraid of a Washington-centered government that is trying to inject themselves into every aspect of our lives — whether it's a cap-and-trade energy policy that would bankrupt a state like Texas, or whether it's ObamaCare, as we're talking about here today ... And you know what? They ought be scared.”

It's a message that fits neatly into Perry's framing of the GOP primary challenge against him by U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison as “Washington vs. Texas” — even though she has vowed as long as she's in her federal post to fight ObamaCare, or what she calls “this massive government takeover of our health care system.”

At the same time, Hutchison cites as a key problem under Perry the high number of uninsured children in Texas — the highest rate in the nation. She has promised to tackle the challenge although she hasn't yet specified how.

State Sen. Eliot Shapleigh, D-El Paso, called Perry's health care record “the worst in the U.S.”

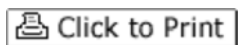
Perry said reform efforts are being made at the state level; some ideas would require a federal waiver. Perry was backed Tuesday by an array of doctors and representatives of the Texas Association of Business and Texas Public Policy Foundation, who oppose pending national health care proposals.

Anne Dunkelberg of the Center for Public Policy Priorities, which advocates for programs for lower-income Texans, said Texas has much at stake with the country's highest uninsured rate and the largest number and percentage of children without health insurance.

“Our deep health care hole means that Texas has the most to gain from health reform,” she said.

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