

California may go its own way with health care rules

By David Siders and Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown's administration vowed Thursday to continue pushing forward elements of the federal health care overhaul in California, even if the U.S. Supreme Court strikes it down.

If the court does rule the federal law unconstitutional, state Health and Human Services Secretary Diana Dooley said California should at least consider enacting its own universal health care legislation, including requiring every Californian to buy insurance.

"I think that we should be committed to making this system more rational than it is today, and improving the health of the people of California," Dooley said in an interview. "If we ask the insurance plans to take everybody and insure everybody with no screens or pre-existing conditions, then we have to have everybody buying some level of health insurance to meet their responsibility to the system."

She said whether the administration sponsors such legislation would depend on "where we are and what the conditions are at that particular time."

Dooley's remarks came a day after the Supreme Court finished three days of oral arguments over President Barack Obama's signature health care law.

At issue is whether Congress can require people to buy insurance and, separately, whether lawmakers overstepped in pressuring states to expand Medicaid coverage.

In 2010, California, amid urging from the White House, became the first state in the nation to enact legislation

establishing a public health insurance marketplace to implement the Affordable Care Act.

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