

## Document Information

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### **Moratorium on new hospitals blocked**

State health officials Wednesday rejected a proposal to stop hospital construction in Idaho.

The Idaho Hospital Association asked the Idaho Board of Health and Welfare last month to put a temporary moratorium on hospital construction in an effort to stop 20 local surgeons from building a private hospital in Boise.

The surgeons haven't broken ground yet, but the association has said it fears the private hospital would attract insured patients and draw necessary revenue away from the community hospitals, like St. Luke's and Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Centers.

The board voted 7-1 against the proposed moratorium after several board members said the board has no authority to stop hospital construction unless it poses a threat to public safety.

"It is a quantum leap to say there is an imminent danger," said former state Sen. Dick Compton of Coeur d'Alene.

"I agree with the senator," said board member Tom Stroschein of Moscow. "Personally, I don't like a moratorium on anything. When you enact a moratorium, it's when there is no other choice. There are other choices here."

The Idaho Hospital Association plans to take its request to the Idaho Legislature in January.

About 20 people showed up for the meeting, including officials from the Idaho Medical Association and Idaho Hospital Association and some of the surgeons who plan to build the hospital.

Richard Roberge, a physician from Caldwell, was the only board member to support the moratorium. A private, physician-owned surgery center in Caldwell already caused West Valley Medical Center in Caldwell to close certain operations, he said. He said he doesn't want to see that happen to other community hospitals.

West Valley's CEO, Kathy Moore, told board members at the Nov. 17 meeting that she closed one operating room this year and might shut down another because surgeries performed at West Valley dropped after a private surgery center opened nearby.

Despite West Valley's situation, board member Don Gross said the issue didn't sound like it posed danger to the public.

"In my opinion, (the Legislature) is where this decision needs to be made," Compton said.

The president of the Idaho Hospital Association, Steve Millard, was disappointed but don't regret proposing the moratorium.

"This is something that needed to get aired," he said.

He said he will propose that lawmakers pass a certificate-of-need law, which would require health care facilities to receive state approval before building, expanding or buying expensive equipment.

Idaho is one of 13 states without some form of a certificate-of-need law. States including Washington have an agency in place to ensure a community needs added medical facilities.

To offer story ideas or comments, contact reporter Melissa McGrath at [mmcgrath@idahostatesman.com](mailto:mmcgrath@idahostatesman.com) or 377-6439.

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