

Very soon Americans will know the fate of the 2010 health care law. The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to hand down its rulings on the law no later than next week. Most observers anticipate an announcement next Thursday.

It is not clear which way the Court will go. It could uphold the law and its linchpin provision – the mandate that every American be required to purchase health insurance. It could rule the individual mandate unconstitutional and strike the law entirely. Or it could strike down the mandate provision while upholding other parts of the law.

One thing is clear. The law is still very controversial among Americans. As the legal arguments for and against it were being made before the Court in March, I was on the steps of the Supreme Court chambers. It was a raucous environment. Ardent opponents and supporters of the law vied for the attention of a throng of national reporters and media.

I did not support the health care bill in Congress; I did not feel it addressed the underlying drivers of health care costs. The nearly 3,000-page law shifts costs to more unsustainable government spending, cuts Medicare, and erodes individuals' health care liberties (the Health and Human Services mandate that restricts religious freedom and rights of conscience is an outgrowth of the law). Yet the bill does include some reasonable reforms, such as allowing young adults to remain on family insurance plans and addressing coverage options for those with pre-existing conditions.

In the coming days, all eyes will be on the Supreme Court. The implications of this ruling are profound not only in terms of individual liberty but also the national economy. Health care spending equals nearly 20 percent of the American economy. Regardless of the outcome, the health care challenges before us will continue to require bold leadership and thoughtful cooperation that centers on affordable catastrophic insurance plans, health and wellness, and protection for vulnerable persons. I am hopeful that whatever decision is handed down may lead to more patient-centered reform that lowers costs and improves health outcomes for Nebraska's families.