

Neb. Medicaid Expansion Proposal Defeated, Again

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A third attempt to expand Nebraska Medicaid coverage under the federal health care law was defeated Wednesday by conservative lawmakers who cast it as an unaffordable expansion of government.

Lawmakers voted 28-16 to send the bill to the bottom of the Legislature's agenda, effectively killing it for the rest of this year.

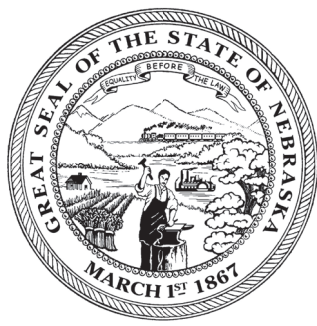
Had it passed, Nebraska would have joined 28 other states and the District of Columbia in offering coverage to more low-income, childless adults. Two previous efforts to pass the bill have stalled in the officially nonpartisan Legislature, where Republicans outnumber Democrats.

Sen. Kathy Campbell of Lincoln said her bill would have helped prepare the state for its future health care needs, but an early test vote showed the measure didn't have enough support to advance.

"We all have visions for where Nebraska can go," Campbell said. "Health care is one of those infrastructure pieces that need to be in place."

Supporters have suggested placing the issue on the statewide ballot, as they did last year with a minimum wage increase, but Campbell said she didn't know whether doing so with Medicaid is feasible because of its complexity.

Expanding Medicaid would have helped cover roughly 79,600 people in Nebraska by 2020, according to the latest estimates by the Legislature's Fiscal Office. The federal government has promised to cover 100 percent of the program's costs through 2016 and then



ratchet its share of the payments down to 90 percent by 2020.

With cost savings included, Nebraska would have saved \$3.5 million in the next fiscal year by expanding Medicaid. The state would have paid an increasing amount in future years, from \$4.4 million in fiscal 2017 to \$26.6 million by 2020. Payments by the federal government would increase as well, to nearly \$447 million by 2020.

Conservative lawmakers railed against the bill. Gov. Pete Ricketts also opposed the measure. In his latest weekly column, the Republican governor said expanding Medicaid would become an expensive burden for the state. Ricketts said Nebraska's Medicaid program consumes \$1.8 billion of the state's total budget and serves about 238,000 people annually.

"We shouldn't be putting people on Medicaid. We should be getting people off of Medicaid," said Sen. Bill Kintner of Papillion. "That's what I came here to do, and I'm going to stand with the taxpayer."

Supportive lawmakers argued that many of the uninsured are working but unable to afford insurance.

Sen. Adam Morfeld of Lincoln said his parents will work the rest of their lives because of medical bills that came after his father suffered a heart attack at age 45. He said his father, who was not insured, was forced to sell their family's home and liquidate his retirement savings to cover the expense. Opponents who criticized the bill haven't offered any alternatives, he said.

"Their silence is deafening, and in many cases their silence is deadly for families and financially catastrophic," he said.

Sen. Al Davis of Hyannis said rural senators have the most to lose if Medicaid isn't expanded, because their districts generally have higher percentages of uninsured residents.

A December report by the advocacy group Nebraska Appleseed concluded that a lack of health coverage was driving many of Nebraska's personal bankruptcies and shifting more costs onto hospitals and businesses. Davis initiated a similar study in the Legislature to show how the bankruptcies damage rural economies.

"We're going to bear the brunt of not expanding Medicaid, and that's going to hurt our communities," Davis said.

A study released last week by two University of Nebraska at Kearney professors said Nebraska would see at least \$1 billion in economic benefits if Medicaid was expanded. The savings included so-called "silent taxes" paid through higher premiums to cover the cost of the uninsured, medical related bankruptcies and reduced consumer spending due to financial hardship.

The bill is LB472

Activists Work To Block Election Law

PIERRE (AP) — Activists are working to block election law changes that opponents say will discourage candidates from running for office and will overly burden independent political hopefuls from getting on the ballot.

The state Democratic Party and other activists are campaigning to stop the law by referring it to the voters. Opponents must secure at least 13,871 signatures from registered voters and submit them to the Secretary of State's office by June 29 to put the issue on the 2016 ballot.

Liberal activist Cory Heidelberger filed a petition in late March to begin the campaign. He says voters' rights are being taken away.

Republican Sen. Ernie Otten worked on the legislation. He says that the law changes make sure political parties are treated equally and are a "good compromise."

Road Expansion Delays Have Big Cost

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A new study says completing a road expansion project between Omaha and Norfolk that's more than a decade behind schedule could save lives and millions of dollars.

Creighton economics professor Ernie Goss, who conducted the study, said Wednesday that expanding a 47-mile stretch of U.S. Highway 275 from two to four lanes would save the state more than \$145 million per year. He said construction of the project alone would create over 1,000 jobs.

Expanding the road would also increase safety, reduce commute times, and stimulate growth in the manufacturing, metals production and cattle operations along the corridor, Goss said.

"You've got a steel mill in Norfolk; you've got heavy manufacturing throughout the corridor; you've got the largest cattle feeding area in the country, and it's all connected with a two-lane 1940's highway, and it's inefficient," said research associate Jeffrey Milewski, who worked on the study with Goss.

The project would cost \$186 million in construction and is a segment of about 100 uncompleted miles of Nebraska's 1988 planned expressway system.

4 Lanes 4 Nebraska, a group of banking, agriculture and manufacturing business leaders, commissioned the study.

"We want to press the case that the state needs to fulfill its obligation to completing the expressway system and, once again, embrace a big-picture roads plan for the benefit of the entire state," executive director Josh Moening said.

Moening said Highway 275 had been scheduled to be completed in 2003, but does not currently qualify for the sales tax percentage designated to other high-priority highway projects. The study suggested funding the construction through pass-through tolls or state-issued bonds, but those methods have so far lacked legislative and executive support in Nebraska.

L.B. Sioux Leader Seeks New Attorneys

LOWER BRULE (AP) — A Lower Brule Sioux tribal official acting as chairman has asked for new tribal counsel and appears to have dismissed three tribal attorneys who worked under late Chairman Michael Jandreau.

Then-Vice Chairman Kevin Wright cited the tribe's constitution and bylaws when he took over leadership Friday, hours before Jandreau died. They opposed each other politically.

Wright appears to have signed letters Tuesday dismissing three lawyers who worked with the tribe, including General Counsel Tara Adamski and attorney Marshall Matz. Wright, Adamski and Matz didn't return calls Wednesday.

Jandreau's funeral is Thursday.

Team

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scenario into a skit.

"I also really like pin trading," he said.

DI teams are encouraged to trade pins at tournaments and Global Finals as a way to meet new friends and show good sportsmanship.

"We bring pins, and when you see a pin you like, you try to organize a trade," Nelson said. "But nobody has to trade the pins. I got

into pin trading because my sister did DI and she came back with all these different pins from different states. I thought they were awesome."

But what Nelson's sister couldn't get was a "Wizard of Oz" set of pins.

"But one time I traded this old pin for an Emerald City pin," he said. "I had to go show her it just so I could say, 'I got a 'Wizard of Oz' pin and you didn't.'"

Nelson's sister was a part of the last team that went to

the Global Finals a few years ago.

The group has a short amount of time to raise the money to make the trip to the Global Finals.

The competition is May 20-23 and the team will be driving, so they must leave a couple days beforehand.

"We are fundraising our way to go," Polzin said. "We are going to be sending out letters to businesses to help sponsor our trip. We are also going to be doing T-shirt sales. If people donate a

certain amount money, their logo will be able to go on the T-shirt."

Though they have a lot of ideas, they do not a lot of time, Polzin said.

"All the students are just thrilled for us because of the bake sales," Nelson joked.

For those who wish to donate to help the Gayville-Volin DI group go to Global Finals, contact Polzin at samantha.polzin@k12.sd.us.

Follow Jordynne Hart at [hartjordynne@twitter.com](https://twitter.com/hartjordynne).

OBITUARIES

Helen Severson

Helen M. Severson, age 93 of rural Volin, SD passed away Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015 at Avera Sister James Care Center, Yankton, SD.

Funeral services will be 10:30 a.m., Saturday, April 11, 2015 at Vangen Lutheran Church in Mission Hill, SD with Rev. Phil Lint officiating. Burial will be in the Vangen Lutheran Cemetery.

Visitations will be from 5-8:30 p.m. Friday, April 10, 2015 at the Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home and Crematory, Yankton with a 7 p.m. Prayer service. Visitations will resume one hour prior to the service at the church.

Arrangements are under the care of the Opsahl-



Severson

Kostel Funeral Home and Crematory, Yankton.

Helen was born March 2, 1922, to Alfred and Huldah (Peterson) Hoxeng near Volin, SD. She attended grade school at Pleasant Valley School, rural Volin. Her family was active in church activities at Zion Lutheran Church (now named Faith United Lutheran Church), also in rural Volin.

When her family moved to Washington State, so her father could look for work in the lumber industry, Helen

elected to stay in South Dakota and attend Augustana Academy, a Lutheran High School boarding school in Canton, SD. There she met her future husband, Mel Severson. After graduating from high school, she attended Concordia College in Moorhead, MN, studying for a degree in elementary education.

After completing her junior year of college, she and Mel decided to get married, as it appeared that he would be sent overseas by the Army Air Force, and she was adamant that they should marry before he went, so that, in her words, "He would be certain there would be someone here for him when he came home."

She took the train from South Dakota to Manchester, New Hampshire, sitting on her suitcase in the aisle most of the way because of the many military personnel traveling.

Helen and Mel were married June 18, 1943. When Mel was shipped overseas in the fall of 1944, Helen returned to live in Yankton near her parents. When Mel returned, they lived in the Volin area on Helen's parents' homestead farm, with a few years in the DeSmet area. When they returned from DeSmet, the family joined Vangen Lutheran Church in Mission Hill, SD.

Helen put her elementary education to good use, raising her children, being

a farm wife, folk dancing with Sons of Norway, serving in various capacities at her church, visiting the hospitalized and homebound, visiting neighbors, and doing various kinds of needlework, including a Scandinavian needlework called hardanger. After her husband's death in 2006, Helen moved to an apartment in Yankton, to Majestic Bluffs Assisted Living in 2012, and to Sister James Nursing Home in 2013.

Blessed to have shared her life are daughters: Valerie Philipp of Madison, SD, Velma Larson of Volin, SD, Valborg Severson of Yankton, SD, Vi (Jim) Ramsey of Cape Town, South Africa; son, Mark

Severson of Gulfport, MS; 17 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren; numerous nieces and nephews, one brother-in-law; and special friend, April Peterson of Stickney, SD.

Helen was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Mel in 2006, daughter, Virginia in 1965, sons, Paul in 1982 and Joe in 1991, brothers Julian, Milton, and Raymond, sister, Hannah, son-in-law, Phillip Larson, and daughter-in-law, Rita (Rieck) Severson.

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April 9, 2015



Beatrice Gant

Mass of Christian Burial is 10:30 a.m. Saturday, April 11, 2015 at St. Ann Catholic Church in Geddes, with

burial in the parish cemetery, rural Geddes.

Visitation with family present will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday at the church, followed by a 7 p.m. wake. Crosby-Jaeger Funeral Home of Wagner is in charge of the arrangements.

Boots Gant was born May 13, 1920 in Geddes, SD to William and Catherine (Reich) Roth. She passed away peacefully Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at the Lake Andes Health Care Center. Boots attained the age of 94 years.

Boots graduated from Geddes Public School in 1938 and from St. Joseph School of Nursing in 1941 in Mitchell. She practiced nursing in Platte and Lake Andes for 50 plus years.

Boots was a member of the St. Ann's Catholic Church, St. Ann's Altar Society, Geddes Historical Society, Civic Club, a 4-H Leader and Platte Hospital Board. She was active in the Hereford Business and enjoyed the outdoors, along with gardening, cooking, sewing, and making her signature dandelion wine.

Boots married Patrick Gant, May 24, 1943 in St. Ann's Catholic Church at Geddes. Together they raised seven children on their farm in Geddes. Mike Gant and friend Heika from Oelwein, IA; Maureen



Gant

Johnson and husband Mike, Grand Junction, CO; Nancy Gant; and special friend Dennis Korbel, Yankton, SD; Mark Gant and his wife Sandy, Geddes, SD; Dennis Gant and his wife Gloria, Geddes, SD; Patrice Mushitz and her husband Bill, Geddes, SD; Sheila Boyd and her husband Randy, Mitchell, SD; 18 Grandchildren; and 24 Great-Grandchildren.

Boots was preceded in death by her parents, her husband Patrick Gant on January 27, 1997, her seven sisters: Sister Ascentia Roth, Catherine Johme, Florence Renz, Marietta Gartner, Dorothy Janish, Cecilia Eichorn, Vi Huggins, two granddaughters, Leanne Foster and Robin Gant.

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Roy Braunesreither

Roy Braunesreither, 91, of Yankton passed away Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at his residence.

Funeral services will be 10:30 a.m. Monday, April 13, at Martinus Lutheran Church, rural Utica, with the Rev. Dean Schroeder officiating. Burial will be in the Garden of Memories, Yankton, with Military graveside rites by the Ernest-Bowyer VFW Post No. 791 Honor Guard and the South Dakota Army National Guard Honor Guard.

Visitations will begin at 5:30 p.m. Sunday, April 12, at the Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory, Yankton, with a Scripture service at 7 p.m. Visitations will resume

one hour prior to the service at the church.

Condolences may be sent at www.opsahl-kostelfuneralhome.com/.

Margaret Olson

Margaret Alma Olson, age 83, of Yankton, South Dakota and formerly of Gayville, South Dakota, died Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton.

Funeral services are 10:30 a.m., on Saturday,

April 11, 2015 at the Gayville Lutheran Church in Gayville with Reverend Dan Brandt officiating. Burial will be in the Yankton Cemetery. Visitation is from 5-8 p.m., on Friday, April 10 at the Wintz & Ray Funeral Home in Yankton with a prayer service at 7 p.m. Visitation continues one hour prior to the funeral at the church.

To send an online message to the family, please

visit www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com.

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