

**MIDWEST DIGEST****Neb. Senators At Odds Over Medicaid Report**

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska's U.S. senators are at odds over whether a new report makes a case for, or against, federal health care reform.

A report released Wednesday commissioned by Nebraska state government says reform will increase the state's Medicaid costs by a total of \$526 million to \$766 million over the next decade. Republican Sen. Mike Johanns says it shows that no real reform was accomplished because people will be dumped into a broken Medicaid program and the message to governors is "now it is your problem."

Democratic Sen. Ben Nelson said the report shows how much of a burden health care costs are to Nebraska families.

Without health reform, he argues Nebraskans would pick up the full costs of the uninsured rather than the federal government paying most of the costs.

**\$13.9M Grants To Expand Broadband In Neb.**

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Two federal grants worth \$13.9 million will help improve access to high-speed Internet service in Nebraska.

Vice President Joe Biden announced the Nebraska projects along with 92 other stimulus grants Wednesday.

One grant of \$11.5 million will go to NebraskaLink to help pay for fiber optic lines connecting up to 100 community institutions statewide to the Internet. NebraskaLink, which is a cooperative effort of seven phone companies, will contribute nearly \$5 million in matching funds.

A \$2.4 million grant will go to the state to help pay for better Internet access at 45 places statewide where the public can use the Internet. The state will contribute nearly \$1.3 million to the project.

**University Helps Native American Students**

PIERRE (AP) — Black Hills State University is offering a 5-day program that will introduce American Indian students to the campus in Spearfish and make it easier for them to get into the swing of college life.

The university has the highest percentage of American Indian students among South Dakota's 6 public universities. Last fall, 3.5 percent of Black Hills State's students were Native Americans.

The Bridge Program will be held from Aug. 25 to the first day of classes on Aug. 30. It is designed to help the students make the change from high school to college.

Students from South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana and Colorado have signed up for the program.

The program is funded by a grant from the American Indian Education Association.

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## Israeli Company Buying Neb. Soybean Plant

SOUTH SIOUX CITY, Neb. (AP) — An Israeli company is making its first production foray in the United States by buying a soybean processing plant in northeast Nebraska.

The wholly owned U.S. subsidiary of Solbar Industries Ltd. is buying the former Green Planet Farms plant in South Sioux City for \$16 million, pending federal regulatory review.

Greg Horn, president of Oakdale, Minn.-based Solbar USA, said Thursday that the company expects to invest \$10 million more for equipment.

Solbar must hire 40 workers to begin operation by Oct. 1, Horn said. Sixty more workers could be added within a year, he said, if there's enough product demand.

Solbar will contract for locally grown soybeans that will be crushed into soybean flour. The plant will process a soy protein isolate, which is used in nutrition bars, sports drinks and vegetarian foods.

The plant's being in the middle of soybean country helped Solbar settle on South Sioux City, Horn said. He also praised the city's infrastructure to support the plant and easy access to rail lines and interstates 29 and 90 for distribution.

The plant is only 2 years old and comes with 40 acres of land that could be used for expansion, Horn said.

Green Planet Foods had started up production in fall of 2008, which proved to be bad timing as U.S. and world markets reeled from the recession.

Green Planet officials said their focus on organic products hurt as the organic market tightened and said the company's lack of capital didn't allow continued operation of the plant.

Horn said Solbar USA is anticipating \$40 million in sales this year, including products from the Nebraska plant. He said parent company Solbar Industries Ltd. is expecting total worldwide sales of \$250 million in 2010. The publicly owned company is traded on the Tel Aviv exchange.

Solbar Industries, which specializes in soy proteins, is based in Ashdod, Israel, and has plants there and in Ningbo, China.

Solbar USA has been selling soybean products from the two other plants, Horn said, but the Nebraska plant will be its first in the United States.

## Neb. Officials Sued For Stopping Prenatal Care

BY NATE JENKINS  
Associated Press Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska state government officials were sued Thursday for cutting off prenatal care to more than 1,500 low-income pregnant women when they ended a program this year that provided Medicaid coverage for unborn children.

The class-action suit filed by the Nebraska Appleseed Center alleges the state acted outside its authority when ending the two-decade-old program. They are asking the Lancaster County District Court to issue a temporary restraining order to restore eligibility to the women and their children.

"All babies should have a chance for a healthy start in life. That has long been a top priority in this state and that policy remains the law in Nebraska today," said James Goddard, attorney at Nebraska Appleseed. "The Department of Health and Human Services did not have the authority to change that policy on its own."

Attorney General Jon Bruning's office did not immediately respond to a message.

More than 800 illegal immigrants and 700 legal residents lost Medicaid coverage March 1 after state officials said they were

forced by the federal government to eliminate the one-of-a-kind policy because it broke Medicaid rules.

It allowed unborn children, not just their mothers, to qualify for Medicaid. That meant women who didn't qualify for Medicaid — such as illegal immigrants — were allowed to get Medicaid-covered prenatal care.

A group of lawmakers tried this spring to create a federally sanctioned program that allows unborn children to qualify for coverage. The effort failed under the weight of anti-illegal immigration sentiment and election-year anxiety.

Gov. Dave Heineman also opposed the plan.

Some health care institutions, including the University of Nebraska Medical Center's physician practice group, helped fill the void by providing free or discounted prenatal services to women who lost coverage. It's unclear how many of the 1,500 women benefited from the free or discounted care.

The lead plaintiff in the suit is a 38-year-old Adams County woman whose name hasn't been released. Appleseed said she is eight months pregnant, a legal resident, and has suffered with gestational diabetes during her two previous pregnancies.

## Neb.'s Congressional Delegation Plays Nice

BY MARGERY A. BECK  
Associated Press Writer

ASHLAND, Neb. (AP) — If there is partisanship playing out among Nebraska's congressional delegation, it didn't show at the group's forum Thursday before a crowd of about 600 constituents.

U.S. Sens. Ben Nelson and Mike Johanns joined House members Jeff Fortenberry, Adrian Smith and Lee Terry at the Strategic Air and Space Museum in Ashland to discuss issues and answer questions. The delegation meets annually in Nebraska for the congressional forum.

Nelson is the delegation's lone Democrat. Despite his conservative leanings and reputation as one of the Senate's most centrist members, Nelson has been a target of Republican criticism since his vote in December to advance Democrats' health care overhaul bill.

On Thursday, Nelson said he and Nebraska's other delegation members get along well.

"I'm not aware of any partisan rift between my colleagues and myself," he said. "We worked

together well ... and we'll continue to do that."

Most of the partisanship seen in Washington in recent months has been fueled by political pundits on television and radio, Nelson said.

"The problem is multifold, with a 24-hour news cycle, with the talking heads, with people on these shows that talk over one another, showing a lack of civility that carries over to others who suddenly believe it's OK for them to be less than civil," Nelson said. "It just builds and has snowballed to the point today where it's very difficult to have civil discourse on a bipartisan basis."

Other delegation members also noted a good working relationship across party lines, with Terry noting that Nebraska delegation members have all worked together to try to secure a new tower and facility for Omaha's aging veterans hospital.

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