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Medicaid Study Complete

Task Force: Expansion Would Improve Care But Could Strain Providers

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — An expansion of South Dakota's Medicaid program would improve health care for thousands of low-income people and could boost the state economy, but it also could put a strain on medical providers and increase state spending, a task force decided Tuesday.

The task force, appointed by Gov. Dennis Daugaard to study the issue, was set up to identify the advantages and disadvantages of expanding Medicaid. After some

last-minute changes are made to its approximately 40-page draft report, the task force findings will be used by Daugaard and the South Dakota Legislature as they decide whether to expand the state-federal program that provides health care for low-income people.

Task Force Chair Deb Bowman, a senior aide to the governor, said the 29 members of the panel did a good job of studying the issue without allowing their personal opinions to interfere during a series of four meetings over the past five months.

"I think overall the governor and the Legis-

lature will get a report that accurately reflects what transpired in these meetings and have a good idea of what the decision points are as it relates to Medicaid expansion," Bowman said.

The federal health care overhaul seeks to provide more people with health insurance through subsidized private insurance offered through online marketplaces called exchanges. Stated also have the option of expanding Medicaid to cover people considered too poor to get the subsidized insurance.

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KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Yankton County Commissioner Donna Freng explained Tuesday why leaking is occurring around some windows in the Yankton County Government Center.

First West Nile Death Reported In S.D.

BY ROB NIELSEN
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The South Dakota Department of Health (SDDH) reported Tuesday the state has seen its first death of the year due to the West Nile virus.

The death occurred in Turner County. In a press release, the SDDH said the victim was a resident in his or her 70s. No further information on the deceased has been released.

Dr. Lon Kightlinger, state epidemiologist for the Department of Health, says this was one of 52 cases reported

in the state so far this year.

"It's higher than normal but it's lower than last year," Kightlinger says. "What we do know is

also

■ Mosquitoes Are Worse This Summer In Parts Of U.S.
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we've had the culex mosquito being very active this year and it's the kind that carries the West Nile virus."

He also says August is normally the peak for West Nile activity, and that this week's rise in temperatures could lead to more mosquito activity than in past weeks.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, there were 203 total cases in South Dakota in 2012 with three deaths. Nebraska reported 193 cases with four deaths in 2012.

In 2013, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services reports 11 cases with no deaths.

Kightlinger advises residents, especially those most vulnerable, to take extra precautions when going outdoors during the summer.

"Be aware that West Nile is circulating, so use mosquito repellent when you're outside, especially in the evening," Kightlinger says. "Cover up and wear long sleeves and long pants at night to keep the mosquitoes off of you. If you're in a really

WNV | PAGE 2

Joining Together



RANDY DOCKENDORF/P&D
Menno-Marion football players watch from the sidelines as their teammates scrimmage during Monday's practice in Menno. The newly-formed Razorback team marks the first football co-op in Menno school history, while Marion has won a state football championship while co-oping with Hurley.

Our Towns | Hutchinson County

New Menno-Marion Co-Op Shows Strength In Numbers

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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MENNO — Last year, Dylan Lehr of Menno and Nick Gortmaker of Marion battled against each other on the football field, with Menno grinding out the victory.

This fall, the two seniors are joining forces as teammates on the newly-formed Menno-Marion football co-op known as the "Razorbacks." The co-op will run four years.

Marion has previously participated in a football co-op, winning a state championship with Hurley. However, this marks the first football co-op for Menno.

"It's different, but it's been a fun move," Lehr said. "The team is coming together, and things have gone well so far."

Gortmaker agreed that the early practices have been successful. He noted the co-op's roster of 34 players, a major contrast to last year when both schools found difficulty fielding enough players.

"It's great (to have enough players) just to scout a defense," he said, adding that the team depth should make the co-op competitive.

Jason Pasco of Menno and Todd Obele of Marion



RANDY DOCKENDORF/P&D
Menno-Marion co-coaches Todd Obele (left) and Jason Pasco talk over developments during Monday's football practice in Menno.

will serve as co-head coaches for the co-op. Obele also serves as Marion's athletic director.

Menno and Marion both competed in Class 9B last

CO-OP | PAGE 3

As The Price Of College Rises, So Does Federal Aid

WASHINGTON (AP) — With college costs continuing to rise, more students are receiving federal financial aid, though state and institutional aid remains largely flat.

Data released Tuesday by the National Center for Education Statistics, a branch of the U.S. Department of Education, shows 71 percent of all undergraduate students received some type of financial aid in the 2011-12 school year, up from 66 percent four years earlier.

Forty-two percent of students received federal

grants, up from 28 percent, and 40 percent received federal loans, an increase of 5 percentage points.

Meanwhile, 15 percent received state grants and 20 percent received a grant from the college or university they attend — figures that have remained essentially unchanged since the 2007-08 school year.

Among full-time, dependent students, access to state grants actually declined, from 29 percent to 26 percent.

"I think these last four years were very tough for

states, and certainly we weren't surprised," said Jack Buckley, commissioner of the NCS.

The data comes just weeks after President Barack Obama signed a law restoring lower interest rates for millions of college students. The law links student loan interest rates to the financial markets, meaning rates will be lower this fall because the government can borrow money cheaply at this time. However, student loans could become more costly if the economy continues to improve, and interest rates increase.

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