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Thursday, June 5, 2025

Volume 44, Number 22

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STATE: Destination Development Grant, a \$15 million initiative **PG. 2**

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TRUE NORTH Vacation Bible School a success in Drayton. Page 9



Top left: Jeanette Wilde. Top right: Hendrix Patterson. Bottom pictures: Moose ears! Submitted photos

Hunter Johnson

Hunter Johnson, a recent graduate of Drayton Public School tied for seventh at the Region Three qualifier in Devils lake to qualify for this week's state golf meet.



North Dakota well-positioned to deal with proposed Medicaid changes

By Michael Standaert, North Dakota News Cooperative

Medicaid reforms in President Donald Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill" are unlikely to lead to major challenges for the state's healthcare system, but implementing new work and eligibility requirements could lead to extra bureaucratic headaches.

Concerns also remain that some people may lose coverage because of the changes and slip through the cracks of the healthcare system.

The bill, passed by the House of Representatives May 22 by a vote of 215-214, includes work requirements of 20 hours of verified work, study or volunteer activity per week for those without a disability between the ages of 19 and 64.

The bill now goes to the Senate for what is expected to be another long deliberation process.

Under the bill's current formulation, states must implement the new Medicaid work requirement system by the end of 2026.

The need to approve additional Medicaid eligibility specialists for the Department of Health and Human Services and amend budget allocations could potentially be addressed by North Dakota legislators at a special session.

Since the 69th Legislature lasted 74 days, lawmakers have up to six days to use for a special session to deal with Trump administration



A bird's-eye view of CHI St. Alexius Health Bismarck Medical Center. Submitted photo

funding cuts and rule changes.

"We want to ensure that this program exists long term for the very people it was intended to help, and those are the disabled, the elderly, and pregnant moms with kids," said Rep. Julie Fedorchak, R-ND.

Data from healthcare information provider KFF shows that, 44% of adults on Medicaid in North Dakota work full-time, 28% part-time and 28% are unemployed.

Only around 10% would fit into the 19 to 65 category of adults without disabilities getting Medicaid.

Several exemptions from the work rules were included in the bill, including for enrolled tribal members, pregnant women and foster youth.

Around 105,000 children and adults are enrolled in Medicaid in North Dakota.

Medicaid expansion was

implemented here in 2014 and around 24,000 adults are covered in that expansion program.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates the changes would increase the number of people nationwide without health insurance by between 7.7 million to 8.6 million by 2034.

Of those, the projections include around 1.4 million who haven't had their immigration status verified, but who are potentially getting coverage in 14 states and the District of Columbia where state-level eligibility rules vary, according to the CBO.

KFF estimates that the uninsured population in North Dakota could increase from 10,000 to 17,000 people in the next decade due to the changes.

Tim Blasl, president of the North Dakota Hospital Association, said it is a little early to tell what the impacts