

Health care law doing good, ex-governor tells hospital group

By John Hanna

The Associated Press

TOPEKA – U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius predicted Friday that federal health care changes approved this year will be refined, but she gave no hint that Democratic President Barack Obama's administration is backing away from a law targeted by many successful Republican campaigns.

She promoted the new law as a significant step toward improving Americans' health and medical care during a speech to the Kansas Hospital Association's annual convention in Topeka. She also talked about the administration's goal of reducing tobacco use.

Sebelius, a former two-term Kansas governor, didn't mention Republicans' strong criticism of the health care changes championed by Obama and fellow Democrats in Congress – or the GOP recapturing a U.S. House majority in this year's elections. She deflected questions from reporters after her speech about the law's future.

She said the administration is implementing the law and seeing positive changes from provisions that allow parents to keep their kids on their health coverage to age 26 and that prevent insurance companies from denying coverage for pre-existing medical conditions.

"Those efforts are moving forward," she told reporters. "We have some very positive changes already in the market place and we will continue to implement the law as we move forward."

Many Republicans, including the members of Kansas' soon-to-be all-GOP congressional delegation, want the law repealed, and Kansas Attorney General-elect Derek Schmidt, also a Republican, has promised to have Kansas join other states in challenging it in federal court.

"A sufficient number of American citizens – and I think a majority of Kansans – are troubled that the balance has gone too far in favor of unfettered federal authority," Schmidt said.

In her remarks, Sebelius didn't touch on the law's requirement that most Americans buy health insurance starting in 2014. That provision, coupled with stiff penalties, helped energize the "tea party" movement and is a key issue in legal challenges by states. Asked about that GOP opposition, Sebelius said:

"I think this is a platform for a big step forward in health care, not only in the delivery system but in the insurance side of the puzzle, and we will continue to work on refining it and improving it as we move forward."

But Tom Bell, the hospital association's president, said uncertainty about the law's future has created anxiety among his group's members about what to expect from the federal government.

"We are, as a country, still divided about this law, and you cannot look at the polls and reach any other conclusion," Bell said after Sebelius' remarks. "Our hope is that folks can go to Washington and over the course of the next couple of years, figure out how they come to some agreement so the that public feels a little bit more united about this."

Sebelius, a former Kansas legislator and insurance commissioner, gained a national reputation in Democratic Party circles with her election in 2002 and re-election in 2006 as governor in GOP-leaning Kansas. She was on a short list of vice presidential possibilities when Obama ran for president in 2008 and resigned as governor in April 2009 to join his Cabinet.

Speaking Friday to an audience of several hundred people, mostly administrators and senior staff of full-service hospitals, she said law addresses issues such as improving electronic sharing of medical records and making sure discharged patients get appropriate follow-up care.

"Nothing is more important than the health of our citizens," she said. "We know that health is a key to the prosperity of this nation because, with an unhealthy work force, we will not be competitive in a global economy."

Sebelius also praised a federal law enacted last year to give the Food and Drug Administration authority to regulate tobacco, including its marketing and labeling.

This week, the FDA unveiled proposed graphic warnings for cigarette packages. In June, new FDA tobacco marketing regulations took effect, preventing brand-name sponsorship of concerts or sporting events.

"This is a renewed effort to really not only help people who smoke stop smoking but, ideally, to stop kids from smoking in the first place," she said.

Thomas County Jail

Booked into the Thomas County jail:

- Christopher Eugene Geissert, 33, Colby, July 25, failure to appear, reckless driving, failure to appear/driving under the influence (second offense), failure to appear/disorderly conduct, Thomas County Sheriff's Office, released Oct. 18 for time served.

- Nancy Elizabeth Robinson, 35, Colby, Oct. 14, sale of a narcotic drug, sale of marijuana, no drug tax stamp, conspiracy (two counts), Thomas County Sheriff's Office, released Oct. 18 on \$100,000 bond.

- Mark Curtis Dulany, 33, Brewster, Oct. 15, possession of certain hallucinogenic drugs, possession of drug paraphernalia, Colby Police Department, released Oct. 18 on \$10,000 bond.

- Sarah A. Hapke, 22, Colby, Oct.15, possession of drug paraphernalia, Colby Police, released Oct. 21 on \$100,000 recognizance bond.

- Willie Maze Mathis, 53, Fort Worth, Texas, Oct. 15, aggravated battery, reckless driving, Sheriff's Office, released Oct. 21 on \$10,000 bond.

- Timothy Junior Powell, 74, Colby, Oct. 15, driving under the influence (third or subsequent offense), Sheriff's Office/Court Services of Thomas County, released Oct. 17 on initial appearance.

- Cole Boyd Wiese, 26, Colby, Oct. 15, possession of hallucinogenic drug, driving with license suspended or revoked, Colby Police, released Oct. 22 on recognizance.

- Christopher Allen Ferguson, 18, Hugoton, Oct. 18, possession of marijuana, possession of drug

paraphernalia, released same day with charges pending.

- Antoinette Michelle Montagne, 27, Colby, Oct. 18, theft of service, Colby Police, released same day on notice to appear.

- Arik Anthony Varela, 19, Highlands Ranch, Colo., Oct. 18, possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, Colby Police, released same day with charges pending.

- Dustin Alan Dowell, 31, Harker Heights, Texas, Oct. 20, possession of marijuana with intent to sell/distribute, no drug tax stamp, conspiracy, unlawful use of communication facility, Kansas Highway Patrol, released Oct. 22 on recognizance.

- John Edward Glover, 29, Austin, Texas, Oct. 20, possession of marijuana with intent to sell/distribute, no drug tax stamp, conspiracy, unlawful use of communication facility, Highway Patrol, released Oct. 22 on recognizance.

- Michael S. Yergey, 22, Menlo, Oct. 20, domestic battery, kidnapping, criminal damage to property, possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, Colby Police, released same day on recognizance.

- Emma Dianne Allmer, 37, Hoxie, Oct. 21, giving a worthless check, Sheriff's Office, released same day on recognizance.

- David Marvin Bauer, 19, Colby, Oct. 21, possession of marijuana with intent to sell/distribute, paraphernalia – possession with intent to store, contain, conspiracy, no drug tax stamp, possession of certain hallucinogenic drugs, possession of other illegal drugs, Colby Police, released Oct. 25 on \$100,000 bond.

- Daniel John Bolte, 19, Lone Tree, Colo., Oct. 21, possession with intent to sell paraphernalia, conspiracy, no drug tax stamp, possession of certain hallucinogenic drugs, possession of certain other illegal drugs, Colby Police, released Oct. 25 on \$100,000 bond.

- Nick Anthony Haggard, 44, Colby, Oct. 21, accident involving damage to other property, duty upon striking unattended other property, Colby Police, released same day on notice to appear.

- Jeremy Alan Kisner, 33, Oberlin, Oct. 21, theft, Colby Police, released same day on notice to appear.

- John L. Stephens, 23, Colby, Oct. 21, giving a worthless check, Sheriff's Office, released same day on recognizance.

- Christopher Richard McIntosh, 21, Colby, Oct. 22, possession of drug paraphernalia with intent, possession of drug paraphernalia ingest, conspiracy, no drug tax stamp, possession of certain hallucinogenic drugs, possession of drug paraphernalia, Colby Police, released Oct. 25 on \$100,000 bond.

- Eugene Henry Huelsman, 68, Oakley, Oct. 24, driving under the influence, driving with license suspended or revoked, transporting open container/alcohol, driving on right side of road, failure to wear seat belt, Kansas Highway Patrol, released same day on notice to appear.

- Eric William Ehlers, 30, Colby, Oct. 25, disorderly conduct, domestic battery, Colby Police, released same day on notice to appear.

Dust Bowl storms started in fall

The expression "Dust Bowl" conjures up images of hot, dry summer days, but, in fact, the infamous period during the 1930s started in late fall.

NASA has traced the start of the U.S. Dust Bowl era to a zero-visibility storm that started in the central Plains on Nov. 12, 1933, and achieved massive proportions by the 13th.

As the dust blew on to the east that day, black rain fell over New York. Snowfall in Vermont was brown, sending New England scientists into studies trying to understand what was wrong.

"It certainly wasn't the first dust storm of the Dirty Thirties. Because it initially blacked out parts

of South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa, it originated much further north than the states that would be hardest hit in years to come," said Mary Knapp, Kansas climatologist housed with Kansas State University Research and Extension.

The late-fall timing was unusual, too, she said. Even so, the November event did mark the decade's first, but not worst example of the scale that Plains dust storms could be.

The era didn't get a name, however, until 1935. That's when Associated Press reporter Robert Geiger witnessed an April day still known in Kansas as Black Sunday. He then wrote that farmers' desperate hopes for rain "rule life

in the dust bowl of the continent." The phrase quickly caught on.

"In many ways 1935 as a whole was the worst in Kansas," Knapp said. "Back-to-back dust storms could sandblast the paint from your house. People caught outside sometimes vomited up dirt clods. A 7-year-old boy suffocated in a drift. Dust derailed a train near Colby. Cattle, wildlife and bird carcasses littered the landscape. A few ministers started saying the end of the world was at hand."

Experts now estimate that by 1940, western Kansas had lost twice the dirt moved in digging the Panama Canal, she said. The 1940 census found Kansas also was left with 80,000 fewer residents.



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