

Nebraska official certifies Medicaid expansion ballot item

August 24 2018, by Margery A. Beck

A proposal to expand Medicaid in Nebraska moved closer Friday to getting on the November ballot after the state's top elections official determined there are enough valid signatures to send the question to voters.

Secretary of State John Gale said 104,477 valid signatures were certified by his office. The effort needed at least 84,269 to make it onto the [ballot](#)

Additionally, organizers were required to gather signatures from at least 5 percent of the registered voters in 38 of Nebraska's 93 counties. Gale said that margin was met in 47 counties.

"The measure will be placed on the 2018 general election ballot, barring an order from the district court handling the pending [lawsuit](#) that challenges the initiative petition," Gale said in a written statement.

The news from Gale's office comes as a Lancaster County District judge is weighing a decision in a lawsuit seeking to block the proposal from making it to the November ballot.

The referendum effort is being spearheaded by the group Insure the Good Life, which wants to expand Medicaid to about 90,000 more residents ages 19 to 64, who earn too much to qualify for regular Medicaid but too little to be eligible for financial assistance under the Affordable Care Act.

Many residents such as hotel, fast-food and construction workers who fall into the so-called coverage gap work in service jobs with no benefits,

Lancaster County District Judge Darla Ideus heard arguments Monday in the lawsuit brought by Sen. Lydia Brasch, of Bancroft, and former Sen. Mark Christensen, of Imperial. Their lawsuit asks the court to declare the proposal "invalid and legally insufficient."

The lawsuit argues that the proposal violates the Nebraska Constitution by including more than one subject: broadening eligibility for the state-federal health care program and asking state officials to seek federal approval of the expansion.

Gale and the Insure the Good Life ballot campaign committee have filed motions to dismiss the lawsuit.

The judge on Monday promised a quick decision in a case.

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