

## **New law may affect Medicaid for Indians**

**FARMINGTON, N.M. (AP)** - A new law requiring applicants to present a birth certificate or passport to qualify for Medicaid could leave some American Indians and others without coverage, according to New Mexico Voices for Children.

American Indians and others who were born at home and do not have a hospital birth certificate will no longer qualify for Medicaid under the new law, said Sharon Kayne, communications director for the organization.

New Mexico Voices for Children estimates that 1.7 million adults and 2.9 million children do not have birth certificates.

The new law, passed as an amendment to the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, takes effect July 1. Its intent was to deny assistance to undocumented immigrants.

Navajo Nation officials said the issue concerns them because many elderly Navajos on Medicaid were born at home.

Navajo Nation Council Delegate LoRenzo Bates of Upper Fruitland said elderly Navajos cannot prove citizenship and many of them do not speak English.

“I guess being the first Americans doesn’t count,” he said.

George Hardeen, communications director for Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr., said Navajo Nation officials have testified before Congress about the law.

If the law is not appealed, he said, it will lead to frustration among Navajo people and their doctors, who will be unable to provide needed care.

Hardeen said Navajos not covered by Medicaid would have to get health care from the already financially strapped Indian Health Services.