Report Finds Foreclosures Harm People's Health In California; Wash. Small Business Health Insurance Program Starts To Sign Up Members

San Francisco Chronicle: "A report released Wednesday found foreclosures have not only economic consequences, but create health problems for the people and families involved -- and those effects can ripple throughout a community. In a survey of nearly 400 residents in two Oakland neighborhoods particularly hard hit by the foreclosure crisis, the Alameda County Public Health Department and Causa Justa/Just Cause, a housing rights group, teamed up to look at how people undergoing foreclosure experience higher levels of stress and increased medical" (Colliver, 9/2).

The Associated Press/Bloomberg Businessweek: "Supporters of an expanded smoking ban said Tuesday the proposed [South Dakota] state measure will protect workers and reduce health care costs stemming from cancer, heart attacks and respiratory disease. A state law in effect since 2002 bans smoking in most workplaces and public areas. The expanded measure, Referred Law 12 on the November ballot, would extend the ban to bars, video lottery establishments and Deadwood casinos. Evidence shows a link between secondhand smoke and certain health problems, said Dr. Karla Murphy, president-elect of the South Dakota State Medical Association" (Ortman, 9/1).

The Associated Press/Seattle Times: "A new state program that offers health insurance to small businesses has begun signing up members. It's called the Health Insurance Partnership. Enrollment started Wednesday and coverage will begin next year. Companies with 50 or fewer employees are eligible" (9/1).

The Oklahoman: "The state's Employees Benefits Council on Wednesday approved revised rates for HMO health insurance plans available to state employees and their families. The revisions came after the state Supreme Court last week ruled legislation passed earlier this year creating a 1 percent fee on insurance claims paid by providers was unconstitutional. ... For 2011, state employees and their families may choose health coverage from three HMO providers: CommunityCare, GlobalHealth and PacifiCare. Employees may also choose HealthChoice, the state-run, self-insured indemnity plan" (9/2).

The Associated Press: "Supporters of a voter initiative that could help bring cheaper prescription drugs to North Dakota are hoping a legal technicality won't keep them from getting the issue placed on the ballot. At issue is a state law that requires most pharmacies to have a pharmacist as their majority owner. Those who want it repealed say the change will allow large retailers such as Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and Walgreen Co. to sell cheaper prescription drugs from their own store pharmacies. Opponents fear the measure could drive rural pharmacies out of business. North Dakota is the only state in the nation with such a law, according to industry officials. It's not certain whether the voter initiative will land on the ballot" (Wetzel, 9/1).

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