



An injury brought Murphy’s Clem to a whole other level

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Stein reverses NC Medicaid cuts

Lynn Bonner
NC Newsline

Two successful lawsuits restoring full Medicaid payments to health providers and more lawsuits in the legal pipeline led to his decision to reverse rate cuts imposed this fall, Democratic Gov. Josh Stein announced Wednesday.

In October, the state Department of Health and Human Services reduced rates for medical services between 3% and 10%, saying the cuts were needed because Republican legislators had not provided enough money to cover increased costs for the entire fiscal year.

Legislative leaders have stepped up their criticism of the cuts in recent weeks, saying they’re unnecessary and accusing Stein of playing politics with health care. Republican budget writers said Medicaid had enough money to last until April without cutting rates.

In the last month, judges in two cases reversed cuts to autism therapy providers and adult care facilities’ personal care services. Three more lawsuits have been filed, Stein said, and more were coming.

“DHHS saw the writing on the wall,” he said. “So the department is restoring all provider rates to where they were be-

fore the cuts took place.” Stein did, however, note that the program would run out of money before the end of its fiscal year.

Payments will be restored retroactive to Oct. 1, DHHS Secretary Dev Sangvai said. A spokesman for DHHS told NC Newsline later that coverage of GLP-1 drugs for weight loss would also resume.

More than 3 million North Carolinians use Medicaid as their health insurance. Rural residents are more likely to rely on Medicaid than their urban counterparts.

See MEDICAID CUTS, Page 11A



Gov. Josh Stein announces the reversal of Medicaid cuts Dec. 10.
LYNN BONNER/NC NEWSLINE



Sippin’ Santa is the tropical holiday-themed pop-up bar that’s become a nationwide popular experience. Asheville will host Sippin’ Santa and Miracle bars for the 2025 season. PROVIDED BY MELISSA HOM

A guide to all things merry

Tiana Kennell
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE – Time is ticking to check off all the names on Santa’s “nice” list. Ease the stress of shopping for the perfect gift at local holiday markets and shops.

Then, unwind with a North Pole-approved cocktail or mocktail at a festively themed Christmas bar to celebrate your victory.

Miracle and Sippin’ Santa pop-up bars will return to The Golden Pineapple in West Asheville and The Tiki Easy Bar at Hi-Wire’s South Slope location. New this year, Asheville’s 12 Bars of Christmas has launched, with 12 local bars adopting festive names and creating a citywide spirited cocktail experience that benefits MANNA FoodBank.

On Dancer, on Prancer! Dash to these one-of-a-kind holiday pop-up shopping experiences and bars through December.

A Taste of the Village

A Taste of the Village will run from Dec. 11-31, with special holiday-inspired dishes, drinks and treats from Biltmore Village businesses, including the Corner Kitchen, Finch, French

See MERRY, Page 10A



Tropical-themed drinks and decor are a part of the Sippin’ Santa pop-up cocktail bar experience at The Tiki Easy Bar through December. PROVIDED BY SIPPIN’ SANTA



Periscope, The S&W Market’s mezzanine bar, will host a market featuring local makers and artists daily from Dec. 13-31. PROVIDED BY MOLLY MILROY

EU seeks long-term freeze of Russian assets

Jan Strupczewski
REUTERS

BRUSSELS – European Union governments want to agree on Dec. 12 to freeze Russian central bank assets immobilized in Europe for as long as necessary, replacing the need for a vote to renew the freeze every six months, EU diplomats said.

The move is the basis for the EU’s plan to use the Russian sovereign assets in the EU for a loan to Ukraine that would keep it financed in 2026 and 2027, allowing the country to continue to defend itself against Russia’s invasion.

The European Commission has proposed using a provision of the EU treaty, Article 122, to keep the assets frozen indefinitely.

The provision gives EU governments a free hand to adopt whatever measures they see necessary, by qualified majority, to address a difficult economic situation in the EU.

One EU diplomat said the plan was for ambassadors from the bloc’s member states to agree on launching a written procedure to approve the use of Article 122 of the EU treaty “by tomorrow.”

The European Commission said last week that using this legal option was justified in the case of the Ukraine loan to preserve the stability of the economy affected by Russia’s war in Ukraine and the hybrid warfare of Russia against EU countries.

“The [EU] economic situation could be further destabilized if the security context was to further deteriorate, as a result of Russia’s intervention in Ukraine or in the Member States,” the commission said, arguing that if Ukraine ran out of money and could no longer defend itself, the EU’s economic situation would become much worse still.

An agreement to freeze the Russian assets indefinitely would eliminate a key risk to the plan of using them to finance Ukraine because Moscow-friendly Hungary and Slovakia would no longer have the power to veto an

See RUSSIAN ASSETS, Page 11A

