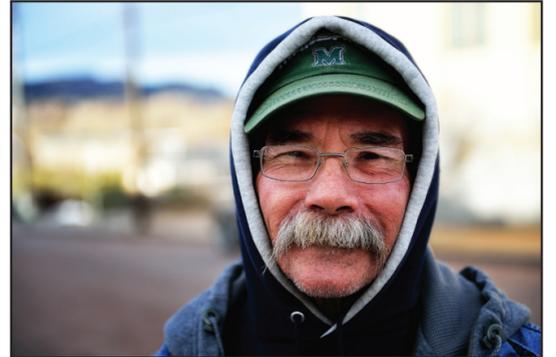


# OVER THE PASS



"I don't have any plans. I haven't done anything special at Thanksgiving for several years. We're spread out but most of my family is in South Florida. I'll probably eat turkey, but I eat it all the time because it's healthy."

Earl Persinger (Trinidad)



## TRINIDAD-RATON CONNECTION

### "What's your plan for Thanksgiving?"

By Tim Keller  
Correspondent  
The Chronicle-News

Photos by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News

"I'll be with family in Saginaw, Texas. Sometimes they come up here but my daughter is having old school friends who used to call me Mom, so I'm going to be Mom for them. I only had two kids but sometimes it feels like 20. I love it."

Michelle Roberts, office manager, Electrical Systems Professionals, Inc. (Trinidad)



"I have to go to work at 2 o'clock but my mom will serve Thanksgiving dinner at noon. She makes everything under the sun—red chile, green chile, turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie..."

Vanity Vigil, dietary manager, Raton Nursing & Rehabilitation (Raton)



"We get together with family either here or in Denver. My dad and oldest brother passed away so we're smaller but there will be about 13 of us, a baker's dozen. Turkey, ham, beans, stuffing, salad, pie, and my mom makes green chile. Maybe a beer. And football—Thanksgiving is a football day."

Geno Sanchez, construction worker (Trinidad)



"Me and my brother and five sisters are split up between Trinidad and Raton. If the weather is nice we get together at my mom's in Trinidad. We have the regular turkey and mashed potatoes. Once in a while my sister will bring ham or spaghetti, but I like my old-fashioned turkey."

Ricardo Aragon (Raton)



"Stay home and have my sister and her son over. It varies from year to year. We'll have turkey and all the trimmings, pie and dressing."

Jay McDowell, retired miner, Allen Mine near Trinidad (Raton)

## TESTING & RETESTING

# States work overtime to fix hobbled health care websites

By STEVE LeBLANC  
Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The state that served as a template for President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act had so much trouble coordinating with the federal government that it became a model of another sort: ineptitude.

The Massachusetts website, designed by the same contractor that worked on the troubled federal website, performed so poorly it prompted a public apology from Gov. Deval Patrick and forced health care officials to adopt a series of manual workarounds, creating a backlog of more than 50,000 paper applications.

Massachusetts was one of several states where the ambition of running their own health insurance marketplace inside a new federal system ran into a harsh reality.

Some, like Oregon and Nevada, folded and decided to go with the federal exchange for the second round of open enrollment, which began Saturday. Others, like Maryland and Massachusetts, fired their technology contractors and are hoping for better results this time.

It hasn't been cheap. The original cost of Massachusetts' website was estimated at \$174 million. That has jumped to \$254 million. When launched, the website was incompatible with some browsers and was riddled with error messages and navigational problems. The problems were so bad, federal officials gave the state three extra months to meet the requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

Patrick said there won't be a repeat of the disastrous roll-out this time around, saying the state has "been testing and retesting" the revamped website.

Minnesota's state-run exchange, MNsure, wasn't ready for prime time when it launched in 2013. Some of the technical glitches that frustrated consumers remained unresolved by the time the open enrollment period closed. MNsure officials are promising a better experience this time — with more call center workers and a website that's 75 percent faster. But they also acknowledge the system won't be perfect.

California's exchange also was ill-prepared to handle the high volume of calls, triggering long wait times at help centers and forcing the state to extend open enrollment for two weeks beyond the original March 31 deadline.

"It swamped us," said Covered California Executive Director Peter Lee, promising increased website capacity and extra call center staff.

Maryland's website crashed on the day it opened last year. The state decided there were too many bugs to completely fix Maryland's original system for the new enrollment period, and the board overseeing the exchange fired its prime information technology contractor and is transitioning to a new system with technology used by Connecticut.

The problems at Washington state's health care exchange occurred after people signed up for insurance. At least 24,000 people who obtained private insurance couldn't use that coverage when they went to the doctor because of problems crediting payments and sending those dollars on to insurance companies. It took

about nine months to fix those problems.

In Vermont, officials announced in August they were scaling back their relationship with the prime contractor on the state's exchange, CGI, reducing the company's role from developing and hosting the Vermont Health Connect site to just hosting it.

Development of the site was switched to another contractor, Optum, the same health care technology firm retained by Massachusetts to revamp its website after it also cut ties with CGI.

Other states fared better.

Colorado's exchange experienced minimal disruptions and the state was able to sign up about 148,000 people.

Kentucky also had a successful rollout, signing up more than 421,000 people for health insurance during the first round of open enrollment. Obama even pointed to Kentucky as an example of the success of his health care law during his State of the Union address this year.

The states were so successful that when Massachusetts was casting around for solutions to its website troubles, it looked to Kentucky and Colorado for what it called "a proven, off-the-shelf solution."

Connecticut was also able to claim bragging rights: After the launch of its marketplace, Access Health CT, officials there predicted the state's uninsured rate would drop to from 7.9 percent to 6.5 percent. Instead it fell to 4 percent.

"We had an office pool going on about what this percentage was going to look like," said Access Health CT CEO Kevin Coughlin. "No one expected we'd be down to 4 percent."

In Massachusetts, the experience of finding insurance through the website is beginning to turn around for some.

Christopher Doty lost his insurance when he lost his job in marketing last month. The 32-year-old Boston resident, who has asthma and needs medicine on a regular basis, said he was quickly able to sign up for insurance through MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program.

"Losing my job and knowing I needed some kind of health insurance at first was super-stressful," Doty said. "I basically had coverage within a couple of days."

On Sunday, Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell told NBC's "Meet the Press" that 100,000 people had submitted new applications this weekend via the federal website serving 37 states. That's a big difference from last year, when only a handful of customers managed to enroll on the first day.

Burwell also said that a half-million people who already have coverage through the program were able to log into their accounts this time.

There were reports Saturday that returning customers had problems, but some of that may have been confusion trying to remember user names and passwords.

Patrick said one way to avoid future problems is heightened vigilance.

"Outsourcing and privatizing — this is not the solution," Patrick said. "The solution is to make sure that there's very close oversight even when we use an outside vendor."

## 2014 SEASON'S GREETINGS

This is the season for being THANKFUL for GIVING and REMEMBERING:

May God's richest blessings be upon each of you for your kindness and generosity. We must not forget to acknowledge those who have given so much through the years. To honor and remember our Veterans and support our Troops, those who served our country in the past and those who are currently in harms way around the world protecting our nation and our future veterans.

In 2014 several groups and individuals placed flags on some 2500 graves of our Veterans in numerous cemeteries throughout Las Animas County. Numerous volunteers contributed their time and expertise to provide a sit down meal for approximately 350 Veterans, their spouses and widows on Veterans Day. Operation Trinidad Responds is made possible with the help and generosity of caring family members and friends, individuals and businesses. Operation Trinidad Responds purchase and prepare packages for the Trinidad troops away from home. We could not have done any of this without all of your generous support and contributions.

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU goes out to the following: City of Trinidad-Mayor Joe Reorda and City Council, Las Animas County Commissioners, American Legion Post #42 Aguilar, Bearden Insurance, Bob & Earl's Café, Century Savings & Loan, Cooke Motors, Duran Oil, Fabilis Wings, First National Bank, Grand Rental, Rusty Goodall, Holiday Inn, Kiwanis of Trinidad, Linda's Alterations, Primero High School Students, Roger Diller, Mountain Liquor, Malouff Tax & Accounting, Safeway, Sawaya Wholesale, State Farm, Standard Sales, Tequila's Restaurant, Wal-Mart, Wendy's Restaurant, Whiskey Creek Ranch, Wonderful House, WWII Veterans Memorial Fund, VFW Fishers Peak Post #984, KCRT, Bob Herrera, Chronicle News, Comcast, Comi Funeral Home, Mullare Murphy Funeral Home, Judith Baca, Linda Barron, George & MaryAnn Ghella, Bertha Gonzales, Bernard Gonzales, Bernard Gonzales Jr., Jim Hainlen, Gary & Kathy Hill, Jack Israel, Donna Leonetti, Wanda Lutz, Fred & Connie Malouff, Jeff & Judy Mangino, Johnathan Mangino, Lynell Mazza, Robert Steele, J&J Woods, Russell & Lynn Worley, Debbie Padilla, Charles & Frances Griego, Dolly Padilla, Sonja Donaldson, Ida Marquz, Kim Schultz, Royce Miell. Thank you to all the donors who helped with our fund raisers by purchasing burritos and scarves.

Father Murray, John Pearce, Boy Scouts Troop #269, Girl Scouts Service Unit #322, Fisher's Peak Fire Protection District, Aguilar American Legion Ladies Auxiliary, DAR, Councilman Joe Bonato and John Rios of VFW for arranging the Fort Carson Color Guard to come to Trinidad, Col. Joel Hamilton, Garrison Commander at Fort Carson; Sgt. Major Clinton J. Reiss, Trinidad High School Cheerleaders, Dante Maes Jr., Priscilla Fraser, and Trinidad Inn Nursing Home. Special thanks to Holy Trinity Catholic Church (Sebastiani Gym) and ALL OF OUR MANY WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS. Please accept our apologies for any name omissions.

Committee Members: Bernard Gonzales, Linda Barron, Nick DeBono, Mary Ann Ghella, Jack Israel, Wanda Lutz, Judy Mangino, Florie Massarotti, Tony Massarotti, Robert Steele Jr., Sheri Files and Lowell Thompson.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU  
HAPPY HOLIDAYS