

Efforts to control Medicaid expenses an uphill battle

By DAVID EGNER

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York state, with the highest Medicaid expenses in the nation, is battling rising costs in the health care program for the poor — and drawing conflicting criticism.

Counties, which are expected to spend \$1.2 billion this year to fund their share of Medicaid in New York, contend the state isn't doing enough to hold down the program's costs.

Doctors and hospitals, operating under state-ordered fee limits designed to keep a lid on Medicaid expenses, contend the state sometimes goes too far in its zeal to save dollars.

With costs estimated at \$6.6 billion in the current state fiscal year, New York's Medicaid pro-

gram is the most expensive in the nation in terms of overall and per capita costs. New York's program accounts for about 20 percent of Medicaid spending in the United States, while the state has 7.6 percent of the nation's population.

Half of Medicaid costs are paid by the federal government, with the state and counties splitting the rest.

"New York has the most mis-managed and inefficient Medicaid system in the country," said Lee Simonson, a Republican member of the Niagara County Legislature who is on the Medicaid task force of the New York Association of Counties.

"There's a lack of concern over how the health care dollar