

Coordinating health & health care
for a thriving Kansas



KHPA Legislative Pulse

1.25.08

Legislative Activity

Legislative updates
focused on KHPA
stakeholders.

Health Reform Recommendations. Interest in health reform continues to percolate among legislators as they learn more about the recommendations and await the introduction of the recommended reforms' bill package.

When will legislation be introduced? A description of the bills and all available legislative language will be provided at the end of next week.

KHPA Addresses Joint Senate Caucus. On January 23rd, Dr. Marcia Nielsen addressed a Joint Senate Caucus to discuss reform recommendations. It was a great opportunity to discuss reform with a broad base of senators.

Legislators, KHPA Board Meet: Key Legislative Leaders Talk Health Reforms

It's another busy week in Topeka as the pace of the session quickens and the legislature gains momentum. This week the KHPA Board also convened, holding its meeting on Tuesday, January 22nd in Topeka.

Among many updates, the Board heard an analysis of the proposed nursing facility provider assessment as well as received updates from KHPA staff on the new Data Consortium and health reform efforts in Kansas.

The Board also welcomed visits from key legislative leadership including Representative Neufeld, Senator Morris, Senator Barnett, Representative McKinney, Representative Ward, and Senator Hensley. Up for discussion were the legislators' expectations and forecast of the 2008 legislature.

While Board members encouraged support of all 21 recommendations as a comprehensive health reform package, some of the questions posed by the legislators turned focus to the proposed statewide smoking ban. The Board encouraged passage of a statewide smoking restriction in public places so that Kansans can gather and work without exposure to second-hand smoke and the health consequences that result.

Twenty-six states have adopted smoke-free ordinances in response to the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. A 2006 Surgeon General's Report states: "scientific evidence is indisputable that secondhand smoke causes premature death and serious disease in both children and adults who do not smoke." The Surgeon General noted that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

KHPA supports local ordinances that have been adopted in the absence of a statewide standard. However, a uniform policy must be enacted to ensure protection from secondhand smoke for all Kansans and address the concern of business owners who believe that local control of smoke free policies results in an uneven playing field as businesses compete with other jurisdictions that may not have a smoke free policy in place.

The Board expressed its appreciation to the legislators for their time and thoughtful consideration of moving Kansas health reform forward through passage of the 21 recommendations as a comprehensive package.

NEW! Check out the KHPA Annual Report online. This annual report provides background on the agency, current programs, achievements, and upcoming agency initiatives: www.khpa.ks.gov

The caucus was inclusive of both Republicans and Democrats, demonstrating that addressing health and health care in Kansas requires bipartisan participation for success.

FAQs: Tobacco User Fee.

During the caucus meeting, several questions were posed regarding taxing tobacco. The proposed increase in the tobacco user fee is one of the 21 recommendations and the primary source of funding for the health reforms. It represents a thoughtful match-up of solutions with funding.

This user fee—targeting the number one preventable cause of death—pays for health reform, serves as a deterrent to smoking (especially among youth), and reduces health care costs. In every state that has enacted an increase, the tax has proven to be an extremely stable source of revenue due to the increased price offsetting the reduction of total purchases.

More FAQs available soon!

KHPA Rolls-out Kansas Healthy Choices

KHPA announces the launch of Kansas Healthy Choices, its newest initiative to extend private health insurance to low-income Kansas families.

Kansas Healthy Choices will expand private health insurance to thousands of low income uninsured Kansas families using a combination of federal, state, and employer funds.

For eligible low-income families (earning less than \$17,000 dollars per year for a family of three and under), Kansas Healthy Choices will provide private health insurance coverage either through employers, where possible, or through competitively bid state-procured health plans. Program funding will be shared by individuals, participating employers, the State, and federal government. Health care benefits will be similar to those offered through the state employee health plan.

Among the goals of the program is to increase health insurance coverage among low income families and to bring parents and children into the same private health plans. For more info, check out the fact sheet at: www.khpa.ks.gov.

Premium Assistance. Kansas Healthy Choices—previously known as premium assistance—was authorized by the Legislature and Governor in May 2007 with the signing of Senate Bill 11. It targets health insurance assistance to low-income families.

Premium Assistance Expansion. The 21 reform recommendations currently being proposed includes *expanding* premium assistance to include health insurance assistance to low-income adults without children.

UPCOMING TESTIMONY:

JANUARY 28

Senate Ways & Means. “Agency overview and prescription drug prior authorization.”

Senate Democratic Caucus. “Health reform.”

Senate Health Care Strategies. “Premium Assistance.”

JANUARY 29

Senate Health Care Strategies. “Insurance Clearinghouse and the Connector.”

JANUARY 30

House Appropriations. “Deferrals, documentation, and presumptive medical disability.”

JANUARY 31

House Appropriations. “HB 2576. Utilization of unused medications.”

KHPA Legislative Pulse is a publication by the KHPA Outreach Team put out weekly during the legislative session. If you have questions or comments, contact Outreach Manager Mandy Cawby at 785.291.3627 or mandy.cawby@khpa.ks.gov.



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