

Coordinating health & health care
for a thriving Kansas



KHPA Legislative Pulse

2.1.08

Legislative Activity

Legislative updates
focused on KHPA
stakeholders.

Legislative Testimony.

It was a fast-paced week of testimony for the KHPA legislative team and executive staff. KHPA testified during six appearances before the Senate Democratic Caucus and legislative committees including Senate Ways & Means, Senate Health Care Strategies, and House Appropriations. Testimony was given on issues ranging from health reform to prescription drug authorization to premium assistance.

KHPA Goes Red. On Thursday, Policy Director Barb Langner addressed attendees of the American Heart Association's Wear Red-Go Red event at the capitol.

Continued

KHPA Testifies on Progress of Kansas Healthy Choices

Since passage of SB 11 in May 2007, KHPA has engaged in an extended, open, and participatory process to complete the program design and implement of the premium assistance program [Kansas Healthy Choices](#). With the January announcement of the Kansas Healthy Choices roll-out, Deputy Director Andrew Allison gave [testimony](#) to the Senate Health Care Strategies Committee on January 28th regarding the program's progress.

Premium assistance is the use of public, employer, and potentially individual contributions to purchase private health insurance for Kansas families living in poverty who cannot otherwise afford coverage.

The program applies minimal restrictions on families' purchase of private insurance, while ensuring:

- State access to 60% Federal matching funds;
- Cost-effectiveness as compared to private insurance and Medicaid;
- Access to affordable healthcare for families living in poverty;
- Protection of benefits to those currently eligible for HealthWave;
- Coverage for newly eligible parents on a par with private insurance;
- Coverage under one plan for each member of the family;
- Continuing access to a primary care medical home.

Over three years, the program is expected to provide about 20,000 existing and 24,500 newly eligible caretaker adults and their children with the choice of private insurance options and a "medical home" model of health care services.

The purchase of private insurance through Kansas Healthy Choices helps control state health care spending for the poverty level population by providing broader access to preventive care as well as strengthens and expands private markets, rather than replacing or eliminating them.

KHPA looks forward to working with the Legislature to finish the task of providing access to coverage for about 10% of the state's growing uninsured population.

Additional information and [fact sheets](#) on Kansas Healthy Choices are available at www.khpa.ks.gov.

NEW! View the January At-Large Council meeting [online](#). The meeting included a review of the 21 Reform Recommendations and discussion on how council members can advance health reform in 2008.

From previous

Wear Red-Go Red for Women is the American Heart Association's nationwide campaign to encourage women to learn more about heart health. Attendees also assembled for a photo op to make the first-ever "human" red dress under the dome.

KHPA Speaks with Health Advocates.

On Friday, Executive Director Dr. Marci Nielsen and the KHPA legislative team visited with the Alliance for Health Care Advocates of Kansas and Kansans for Better Health. They discussed health reform and advocacy's role.

The Alliance for Health Care Advocates of Kansas is an association of various health advocacy groups in Kansas, including the Kansas Public Health Association, the Kansas Hospital Association, Kansas Action for Children, and the Kansas chapter of the American Heart Association.

Dr. Nielsen will also speak to the group at its Health Day at the Capitol on March 6th.

Governor Continues Push for Health Reform

On Tuesday, Governor Sebelius continued the push for comprehensive health reforms and the tools to fund those reforms. The Governor released a statement calling for reform "... from the way we administer health services to the choices we make in our own lives." View [here](#).

Sebelius again expressed support for the KHPA comprehensive package of health reform recommendations, calling it "an aggressive plan to repair this ailing system." The governor also drew attention to the necessity of a funding source for health reform, specifically through a fifty-cent increase in tobacco taxes.

Sebelius acknowledged the hesitancy of legislators to adopt new taxes in an election year but offered encouragement, citing Kansans' overwhelming support of increase in tobacco taxes to support health reform.

Said Sebelius: "Increasing the cost of tobacco products reduces the number of smokers and keeps teenagers from starting to smoke in the first place. Saving lives, enabling more children to receive health insurance, and paying for the comprehensive health reform Kansas needs are three great reasons to increase this tax."

Local Choice: Senators Introduce Smoking Ban Bill. On Tuesday, a bill providing for a statewide smoking ban was introduced by a contingent of five senators to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The KHPA Board will review the language in [Senate Bill 493](#) before taking an official stance.

Status of KHPA Health Reform Bills. Earlier this week, KHPA received draft language for some of the bills in its health reform bill package. Additional draft legislation will be forthcoming.

UPCOMING TESTIMONY:

FEBRUARY 6

Senate Insurance & Financial Institutions. 3:30 p.m. Re: SB 511—Bariatric Surgery Study.

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



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