

Coordinating health & health care
for a thriving Kansas



KHPA Legislative Pulse

3.21.08

Legislative Activity

Legislative updates
focused on KHPA
stakeholders.

Senate Committee To Confer On Statewide Smoking Restriction.
On Monday, March 24th, the Senate Ways and Means committee will confer on [SB 660](#), a bill that would enact a comprehensive statewide smoking restriction (without a county opt-in) prohibiting smoking in public places and places of employment and within 10 feet of entrances and exits at such locales. The bill leaves in place the power of local governments to enact even stronger provisions than would be established by this new law.

House Passes Appropriation Bill.
On Thursday, the House passed [HB 2946](#), the

House Develops Compromise Health Reform Legislation

In the shadow of Senate action around health reform, this week House bi-partisan leadership developed compromise health reform legislation. Taking components of KHPA recommendations on health reform as well as several issues championed by [Speaker Neufeld](#) (R-Ingalls), the compromise language builds upon the recently passed House Health and Human Service committee's health reform bill – [House Substitute for SB 81](#).

In regards to KHPA health reforms, SB 81 would:

- Define "medical home;"
- Include the Commissioner of Education on the KHPA Board;
- Establish a study on young adult insurance policies;
- Establish a study on physical fitness and school health;
- Establish "Very Small Employer Group" for insurance policies (1-10 employees and sole proprietors);
- Provide dental care for pregnant women on Medicaid;
- Create the Small Business Health Policy Committee;
- Transfer the Cafeteria Plan Promotion Program to the KHPA;
- Increase access to care for Kansas children through aggressive targeting and enrollment of children eligible for Medicaid;
- Expand cancer screenings;
- Provide a statewide community health record; and
- Provide funding for the first year of premium assistance as mandated by SB 11 (2007).

The House is expected to take action on the legislation on Monday, March 24th. In a letter to House legislators, KHPA Executive Director Dr. Marcia Nielsen and KHPA Board Chair Connie Hubbell urged support for the compromise language, saying: "House Republican and Democratic leadership have drafted a thoughtful compromise amendment which represents a valuable step forward, not only for the legislative process, but for the health of our state's people. This compromise contains provisions to expand access to health care for the neediest Kansans, improve coordination in our health care system, and advance the health of the public through improved cancer screening and tobacco cessation.

"The KHPA supports the health reform compromise and we commit to doing whatever we are able to move it forward."

NEW! KHPA welcomes aboard [Fran Breyne](#) as Director of Communications to coordinate media and public relations. Fran will also lead a forthcoming website redevelopment project.

\$13.4 billion House Appropriations Mega Bill for fiscal years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, including funding for KHPA operations and programs.

The appropriations are a modest two percent increase in state allocations. The bill covers most of the basic funding for state government operations but further postpones decisions on most program enhancements in anticipation of revenue forecasts during Omnibus at the end of the legislative session in early May.

HB 2946 maintains KHPA appropriations at status quo and, like most other state agencies, program enhancements are stalled.

HB 2946 will now go to the Senate where on Friday, March 21st, Senate Ways and Means passed its budget proposal for consideration by the Senate committee of the whole next week.

House and Senate negotiators will determine the final budget in conference committee.

Senate Axes Premium Assistance

On Wednesday, March 19th, the Senate took final action on [SB 541](#), the chamber's health reform bill which was significantly gutted [last week](#) in Health Care Strategies committee. The committee, chaired by [Sen. Wagle](#) (R-Wichita), deleted from current law the mandate for the premium assistance program as approved by the 2007 Legislature.

"I can only describe it as a colossal failure," said [Senate Minority Leader Hensley](#) (D-Topeka). "When we have an opportunity in our state to take care of our own citizens, I think we should seize that opportunity."

As an alternative, the bill increases the coverage for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) from its current level of 200% to 250% over the next two years, pending Federal funding.

The proposed expansion would make children in a family of three with an annual household income of \$44,000 eligible for coverage under SCHIP. President Bush has already vetoed increases in SCHIP appropriations twice.

"We support every action that brings insurance coverage to an uninsured Kansas adult or child including the SCHIP program and its expansion," said KHPA Executive Director Dr. Marcia Nielsen. "Unfortunately, this measure is balanced on the back of whatever the Feds decide to do. With a twice-vetoed effort, there's simply no real Federal money behind this measure."

"In addition, this comes at the expense of a mandated, already developed premium assistance program that would open up private insurance coverage to 24,000 very low income Kansas parents."

SB 541 also includes adding the Commissioner of Education to the KHPA Board and creates a definition for the term "medical home." Following its 30-8 vote in the Senate, the legislation was referred to the House for its consideration.

Barnett Champions Expanded Funding for Safety Net Clinics. On Thursday, March 20th, [Sen. Barnett](#) (R-Emporia) introduced a bill to provide an additional \$1.5 million to safety net clinics. Currently, the state's 33 safety net clinics receive about \$5.1 million annually in state appropriations. The increased appropriations are projected to increase patient caseloads by nearly five percent.