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KHPA Legislative Pulse

3.28.08

Legislative Activity

Legislative updates
focused on KHPA
stakeholders.

Senate Passes Mega Budget Bill. The Senate passed its Mega Bill [SB 658](#) on Friday, March 28th. SB 658 will now join House Mega Bill [HB 2946](#) in conference committee.

Statewide Smoking Restriction Moves Out of Committee. On Monday, the Senate Ways and Means committee endorsed [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 gov-

HOUSE PASSES HEALTH REFORM; BILLS MOVE TO CONFERENCE

The Kansas House of Representatives voted by a margin of 103-20 on Tuesday, March 25th on a health reform compromise, [House Substitute for SB 81](#). Many of the KHPA Board's health reform [recommendations](#) were included in the compromise, along with several policies advanced by the House Health and Human Services Committee and the House Speaker [Melvin Neufeld](#) (R-Ingalls).

The KHPA was charged by the legislature last session to develop a package of reform recommendations. The recommendations were finalized following a dialogue with policymakers, stakeholders, and members of Kansas communities during extensive listening tours of the state.

The reforms recommended by the KHPA Board included promoting personal responsibility, paying for prevention and promoting medical homes, and providing and protecting affordable health insurance.

The House compromise included provisions:

- To expand cancer screenings and provide dental care and tobacco cessation for pregnant women;
- Increase coordination of care through statewide community health records and a process to establish "medical homes" for Kansans;
- Expand Medicaid to pregnant women from 150% of FPL to 200% FPL (\$35,200 for a family of 3);
- Provide first year funding for [Premium Assistance](#), a new private health insurance program for very low income Kansans.
- Expand opportunities for employees and employers to take advantage of Section 125 plans, which allow employees to purchase health insurance with pre-tax dollars.

The ultimate decision about the outcome of the health reform legislation will be determined early next week when the House bill will move to conference committee alongside the more narrowly drawn Senate-passed health reform bill [SB 541](#). The appointed conference committee members are Sens. [Wagle](#) (R-Wichita), [Brungardt](#) (R-Salina), and [Haley](#) (D-Kansas City), and Reps. [Landwehr](#) (R-Wichita), [Colyer](#) (R-Overland Park), and [Flaharty](#) (D-Wichita).

NEW! View the original KHPA Board health reform recommendations side-by-side with the components of the House and Senate health reform bills [online](#).

ernments to enact even stronger provisions than would be established by this new law.

KHPA submitted [testimony](#) in support of the comprehensive statewide smoking restriction.

The committee did include amendments to exempt commercial motor vehicles, veterans' homes, tobacco shops, the main floor of a proposed casino in southeast Kansas, and designated smoking areas in nursing homes.

The bill is now eligible to advance to the Senate floor for consideration, although even bill proponent [Sen. Wysong](#) (R-Mission Hills) was cautious.

"Thanks to timing," said Wysong. "It will be very difficult to get [the bill] through the entire Legislature this year."

Wysong went on to say that the committee's action puts opponents on notice that supporters will continue to push for a statewide smoking ban in Kansas.

An Open Letter to Kansas Health Consumers

Early next week, legislators from the Kansas Senate and House of Representatives are expected to meet in Conference Committee to make a pivotal decision about health reform in our state. Active discussion about health reform in Kansas started in November last year with the release of the 21 health reform recommendations developed by the Kansas Health Policy Authority. Those recommendations were the result of conversations with hundreds of health care consumers, advocates, and providers across Kansas and were designed to transform the Kansas health system, lower health care costs, and make Kansas a healthier state.

During this session, health reform was debated in the legislature and a thoughtful compromise bill emerged from the Kansas House of Representatives, resulting in House substitute for Senate Bill 81. The compromise encompassed many of the KHPA's original 21 recommendations. Last week, bipartisan leadership in the House played an important role in advancing the compromise health reform bill. Action next week in Conference Committee could result in meaningful Kansas health reform if the House compromise provisions are included in the final bill.

Important elements of the House health reform bill that will be debated next week include:

- Providing first year funding for Premium Assistance, a new private health insurance program for very low income Kansans;
- Expanding opportunities for employees and employers to take advantage of Section 125 plans, which allow employees to purchase health insurance with pre-tax dollars;
- Expanding cancer screenings and providing dental coverage and tobacco cessation assistance for pregnant women;
- Expanding Medicaid to pregnant women from 150% of the Federal Poverty Level to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$35,200 for a family of 3);
- Increasing coordination of health care through statewide community health records and establishing "medical homes" for Kansans.

Next week's Conference Committee will be a defining moment for true Kansas Health Reform. Please [contact your legislator](#) in the coming days to express your opinion about this issue.

Sincerely,



Marcia Nielsen
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Connie Hubbell, Chair
Kansas Health Policy Authority Board

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@khpas.gov.



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