

Coordinating health & health care  
for a thriving Kansas



## KHPA Legislative Pulse

5.9.08

### Legislative Activity

Legislative updates  
focused on KHPA  
stakeholders.

**Speakers Available!**  
KHPA Speaks On  
Health, Health Reform,  
KHPA Programs, and  
More. As public servants  
and volunteer leaders,  
KHPA staff, Board, and  
advisory council mem-  
bers value opportunities  
to reach out and gain  
input from Kansans  
through speaking en-  
gagements to local  
groups.

Examples of recent  
presentations include:

- Executive Director Dr. Marcia Nielsen spoke at the annual meeting of the Kansas Medical Society on May 2nd;
- Outreach Manager Mandy Cawby was joined by Peggy Johnson, Chair of the KHPA Consumer

## Legislature Passes Omnibus; Health Reform Funding Missing

On Wednesday, May 7th, the Kansas Legislature adopted an Omnibus appropriations bill, effectively bringing closure to the 2008 legislative session. Unfortunately, the Omnibus conference committee agreement that the Legislature chose to adopt omitted funding for most of the health reform compromise, and funded only a single proposal recommended by the Kansas Health Policy Authority.

Some of the initiatives, originally proposed by the KHPA as a 21-point package of health reform recommendations, were included by the Legislature together with other health reform policies, ultimately resulting in the development of a health reform compromise between House and Senate negotiators. Funding was left to the Omnibus appropriations process.

According to KHPA Executive Director Dr. Marcia Nielsen, "So much time and so many resources were invested in the process of developing health reform, as instructed by the legislature last year. To have a compromise on health reform without adequate funding will be difficult to explain to Kansans who care deeply about these issues."

Despite what will result in potential "unfunded mandates" that could place some agency operations at risk, Dr. Nielsen stated, "Health reform is a major multi-year undertaking and the Kansas Health Policy Authority is committed to pursuing the goal of a healthy Kansas *for all Kansans*. The problems in our inefficient and expensive health system get worse as the economy tightens. Kansans expect all of us to step up to the plate and work together on common sense solutions."

The conference committee's health reform compromise contained nine of the original 21 policy reforms advanced by the KHPA. Out of those nine reforms, only one was funded by the Legislature. That item was:

- **\$550,000 to fund the Coordinated School Health Program.** This program promotes physical fitness/activity/nutrition through the Coordinated School Health Program as administered by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE).

Each day is a gift. That's why they call it the present. Learn more about how to make each day a healthful one at Kansas Health Online: [www.kansashealthonline.org](http://www.kansashealthonline.org).

- Health Reform Advisory Council, in a presentation to the Wichita Rotary Club on April 28th;
- Medicaid Eligibility Manager Jeanine Schieferrecke presented on Medicaid eligibility at the Kansas Faith Alliance for Health Reform summit on April 27th;
  - Medicaid Medical Director Dr. Margaret Smith presented on the medical home model at the 3rd Annual Governor's Kansas Public Health Conference on April 29th.

In addition, KHPA volunteer leaders like Board member Arneatha Martin and Board Chair Connie Hubbell have presented to various local groups. In his professional capacity, Board member Ned Holland speaks on Kansas initiatives in his travels nationwide.

If you'd like someone to speak to your civic club, outreach ministry, or organization, call 785.291.3627 to coordinate a speaker.

## *Legislature Passes Omnibus ... (Continued)*

From the outset, KHPA had identified and recommended funding mechanisms for all of the 21 health reform recommendations. The health reform compromise left out these critical elements — not only policies that didn't have a price tag, but also policies that would have saved Kansas dollars. The statewide smoking ban in public places would have helped control health care costs in the long run as the number of smoking related illnesses decreased. The KHPA also funded the entire 21-point health reform package for a minimum of five years with a nominal increase in the tobacco user fee, a policy supported by a majority of Kansans.

"The legislature asked us to provide a way to fund health reform. And that is why we made it a point to identify in the health reform plan a means for funding the initiatives through an increase in the tobacco user fee," said Dr. Nielsen. "It was a very thoughtful match-up of cause and effect. Increasing tobacco user fees decreases rates of smoking and improves health outcomes, as well as provides a continued source of revenue for health reform. Many states used tobacco taxes to improve health and fund reform - this discussion in Kansas is likely to continue."

**What are the next steps for health reform in Kansas?** KHPA staff will take the remainder of the 21-point health reform plan back to the KHPA Board along with the sentiments of the Legislature. The KHPA Board will then set the agenda for next steps.

The Board's work will be aided by its four health reform advisory councils involving the input of consumers, providers, and purchasers. The health reform advisory councils will reconvene in June. *More information to follow regarding these meetings.*

While the Board's next steps must involve health reform, its planning is not restricted to health reform alone. At its upcoming annual retreat, the KHPA Board will be undertaking a three to five year strategic planning process for the agency. Health reform will be *one part* of the strategic plan for a state agency that has an ongoing responsibility to manage nearly \$2.5 billion of public programs in service to the people of Kansas.

*KHPA Board meetings are open, public meetings, as is the Board retreat. The annual Board Retreat will be held June 18th-19th at The Eldridge, Crystal Ballroom, 701 Massachusetts, Lawrence, Kansas.*

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](mailto:mandy.cawby@khpas.gov).



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