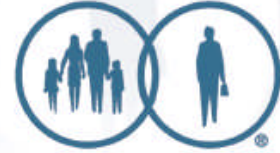


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Florida Academy
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Legislative action
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Update



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April 6, 2007

Legislative Week Five...

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Week 5 of 9 of the Legislative Session is complete. In order to celebrate the Passover and Easter Holidays, the Senate did not meet this week and the House only met on Wednesday afternoon and Thursday. Behind the scenes, both chambers worked on their respective budgets and quietly discussed property tax issues. The remaining weeks of the Session will be fast and furious as the legislators spend more time in committee and on the floor of their respective chambers.

On the FAFP front, we saw movement on the immunization bill (see below). All of our other issues remain unchanged. Following is the status of our priority issues.

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Immunizations:

This week, the House Healthcare Council heard **HB 543**, relating to immunizations. An amendment was offered to narrow the scope of the bill by allowing pharmacists, after receiving limited training and certification, to administer only flu shots. However, tucked into the final sentences of the amendment was a provision that would allow the State Surgeon General to add other vaccines to the list. After a lengthy discussion and debate, **HB 543** passed on a close vote of 9 to 7. Majority Leader Bowen participated in the meeting and voted for the bill. Her attendance at the meeting is a very clear sign that Speaker Rubio and House Leadership support this scope expansion. **SB 2022** will be heard next Tuesday in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The Senators are likely to be unhappy with the Surgeon General provision in the House bill. **HB 543's** next stop is the House Policy and Budget Council. We are working with the medical community on these bills.

HB 543 and **SB 2022** also both contain numerous provisions dealing with the State's preparedness in the event of a vaccine shortage, as well as how the State can continue to develop as a biotech hub.

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Death Certificate (no action this week):

SB 1958 and **HB 1299** would permit an ARNP to sign death and fetal death certificates. FAFP has taken the position that this process is the responsibility of a doctor, especially in determining the cause of death. The Senate bill was referred to the Health Regulation Committee and the House bill was referred to the Health Quality Committee and the Healthcare Council. **HB 1229** has still not been heard in a committee and **SB 1958** has been postponed for the last four weeks. We are hopeful that these bills will continue stall as we move toward the final weeks of committee hearings.

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2007-2008 Budget & Medicaid (no action this week):

The House and Senate released their initial budget proposals late last week. They are both lower in total appropriations than from the 2006-2007 fiscal year. In total, the Senate budget is \$71.855 billion versus the House's \$70.248 billion. There are two significant differences between the two in that the House spends \$1.1 billion less in general revenue (recurring revenue) than the Senate, and the Senate spends about one billion dollars more on the Department of Transportation than the House.

The health care portion of the budget is the reverse with the House appropriates \$24.1 billion on health and human services while the Senate allocates \$23.8 billion. The total Medicaid budget for the House is \$16.264 billion while the Senate is more than six hundred million less than the House proposal. Both chambers spend the same amount for prescription drug assistance (\$1.428 billion) and physician reimbursements (\$2.702 billion). The dollars for Medicaid payments to doctors represent an 18% increase over last year's budget. This increase reflects more claims, not an increase in reimbursement levels.

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Amendment 4 Implementation – More Questions than Answers:

The biggest priority this year for the public health organizations, American Lung, Heart, and Cancer, is to ensure the Legislature appropriately implements Amendment 4 – creating a comprehensive statewide Tobacco Education Program. The Senate bill rests ownership of the Tobacco Education Program in various Area Health Education Centers around the state. The proposal has lessened oversight responsibilities than the House proposal and changes the historic role of the Florida Department of Health in tobacco control and education. Moreover, the proposal appears to restrict community based tobacco education programs, with the exception of the AHEC's, from competing for dollars. At this point, we have more questions than answers and are working with Senator Peaden to understand his policy rationale.

HB 7045 has been placed on the House Calendar on second reading and we are expecting it to be heard on the House floor shortly. **SB 1126** is awaiting action by the full Senate. Following this process, the House and Senate will have to work out their different approaches to implementing the program. At this point, Lung, Heart, and Cancer strongly support the House position. Moreover, they are very pleased that the dollars provided for in the budget for this effort are intact and have

not been diverted for special interest projects.

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The following is a brief status on other important legislation:

- **SB 556/HB 1263** relating to ARNPs prescribing controlled substances
 - **SB 556** has been referred to the Senate Health Regulation Committee and the Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee. **HB 1263** has been referred to the House Health Quality Committee and the House Healthcare Council. Neither bill has received a hearing.

- **HB 879/SB 248** relating to clinical nurse specialties
 - **HB 879** is waiting to be heard in the House Policy and Budget Council. **SB 248** is in the Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee.

- **HB 1007/SB 692** deals with physician assistants writing prescriptions under proper supervision
 - **HB 1007** is awaiting a hearing in the Healthcare Council, its last committee stop. **SB 692** awaits a hearing in the Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee.

- **HB 805/SB 1478** regarding specialty physician advertising
 - **HB 805** was referred to the House Health Quality Committee and the House Healthcare Council. **SB 1478** was referred to the Senate Health Regulation Committee. Neither bill has received a committee hearing to date.

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