

March 23, 2007

Legislative Week Three...

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The most common word in the Capitol this week was “No” as budget realities set in and many new funding initiatives were left unfunded in the early budget proposals. Moreover, many policy initiatives are now taking center stage -- the NRA proposal allowing employees to keep guns in their vehicles at the workplace; Governor Crist’s proposal for voting machine paper trails; and, the telephone industry initiative to allow them into the cable television business. Week three has concluded, but the fun is just starting.

On the FAFP front, the following is the status of our priority issues.

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Immunizations:

This week the Senate Committee on Health Regulation heard **SB 2022**, the immunization bill. This legislation allows pharmacists, after receiving limited training and certification, to administer vaccines. It was high drama in the committee as pharmacy students from FAMU and medical students from UF were present to testify. The bill sponsor, Mike Bennett, diffused much of the drama by amending his bill to only include the administration of flu shots. Following this amendment, the committee passed the bill unanimously. We expect the House bill, **HB 543** sponsored by Representative Juan Zapata (R-Dade), to be narrowed to flu shots as well.

In addition to the immunization provision, **HB 543** and **SB 2022** 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:

SB 1958/HB 1299 would permit an ARNP to sign a fetal death certificate. 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. **SB 1958** was temporarily postponed two weeks ago and was not revived this past week. **HB 1229** has yet to be heard in committee. The momentum on this legislation has slowed dramatically following the Senate hearing. With the committee process winding down, we are hopeful that the bills wind down as well.

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2007-2008 Budget & Medicaid

This week, the House and Senate respectively began releasing outlines of their 2007-2008 budgets. While all the details are yet to be finalized, there is little doubt that this budget year will be extremely tight compared to the previous two years.

The House Health Care Council Chairman Aaron Bean (R-Fernandina Beach) announced his preliminary budget on Tuesday. The council's budget did not include all specific appropriations, but was just over \$141 million less in total health care appropriations than the Governor's most recent recommendations. The House proposal included \$3 million for the Florida Health Insurance Network, which was close to what Crist proposed. However, the House did not fund Crist's stem cell research program nor did it continue the \$1.2 million obesity prevention program that was started last year.

The Senate Health & Human Services Appropriations Committee took three days to release their proposed budget, which was smaller than either the House proposal or the Governor's proposal. The Senate's HHS proposal was approximately two hundred million below the House proposal for Medicaid spending and over six hundred million dollars less than Governor Crist's Medicaid spending proposal. The Senate did not include any new dollars for physician fee increases, funds to address the upcoming deficit in the funding uninsured care in Florida's hospitals (otherwise known as the Low Income Pool), provided no funds for the Governor's stem cell research proposal or Crist's pandemic preparedness program.

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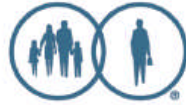
The following is a brief status on other important legislation:

- **SB 556/HB 1263** relating to ARNPs prescribing controlled substances
 - SB 556 has been referred to Health Regulation; Health and Human Services Appropriations and HB 1263 has been referred to Health Quality and the Healthcare Council. Neither bill has received a hearing.
- **HB 879/SB 248** relating to clinical nurse specialties
 - HB 879 was reported favorable in the House Health Quality Committee and is awaiting a hearing in the Healthcare 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 was reported favorable in the House Health Quality

Committee and is awaiting a hearing in the Healthcare Council. SB 692 is in the Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee.

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

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