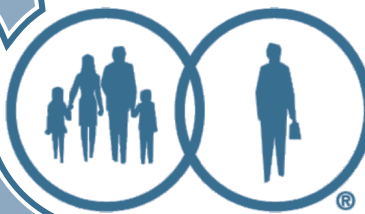


BYTES



A Publication of the
**Florida Academy of Family Physicians
& the FAFP Foundation**

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Final Capitol Update

The title to an old country song appropriately summarizes Florida's fiscal situation and the actions of the 2008 Legislature: "I'd love to take you out like I said I would honey, but there's too much month at the end of the money." Legislators trimmed almost six billion dollars from state coffers due to a slowdown of revenue collections. With a no new taxes pledge, legislators skimmed through with a lean budget consisting of massive cuts to services.

On the policy front, the state Senate remained the more moderate, deliberative body while the state House was the marketplace of ideas. Collaboratively, the chambers addressed

issues ranging from guns in the workplace and funding sensitive lands to further tweaking property insurance laws and to streamlining the hospital certificate of need process. Several social issues also emerged but ultimately did not pass, including abortion restrictions, an evolution/science in the classroom discussion and an "I Believe" license plate.

Governor Crist enjoyed a successful second session with the passage of his Cover Florida Health Insurance Plan, a massive energy bill and a balanced budget. Thank you to all FAFP members who responded to legislative "Speak Up" alerts and served as Doctor-of-the-Day in the Legislature.

2008-2009 Budget and Medicaid

The 2008 Legislature approved the FY 2008-09 budget on day 60 of the legislative session, and the budget is currently awaiting approval by the Governor. Faced with significant revenue shortfalls, the Legislature made use of more than \$300 million from the Lawton Chiles Endowment Fund to bolster healthcare programs, including the Medically Needy Program and the Medicaid Aged and Disabled Program, and to mitigate significant reductions to county health departments. These programs are maintained at current eligibility and service levels for one more year since one-time money was used to keep the programs intact.

An estimated 7.3 percent reduction in rate cuts will impact hospital inpatient and outpatient services that are required by law to serve all patients regardless of their ability to pay. Managed care organizations received a 6.5 percent reduction, and nursing homes that serve Medicaid recipients received a similar cut.

The final budget did not include any increase in physician reimbursements as the House had originally proposed. However, it did include a reduction of one dollar per patient (from three to two dollars) for physicians who manage the care of MediPass patients. One cost-savings provision included in the budget was a requirement for an automatic assignment of MediPass recipients who live in counties with two or more managed care plans to be automatically enrolled into a managed care plan if they fail to make a choice during their designated choice period. This measure provides \$5.72 million in estimated savings.

There was no agreement related to the possible expansion of the Medicaid Reform Pilot Program in other counties for 2010 as had been proposed by the House.

Many Thanks!

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to our lobbyist, Jim Daughton, and his team, Geoffrey Becker and Wendy Hedrick, for their untiring work on behalf of the FAFP and for this very comprehensive report.

Expanded Health Insurance Options: Passed

SB 2534 (Enrolled) combines two healthcare proposals: the **Cover Florida Plan**, a priority of Governor Charlie Crist and the **Florida Health Choices Program**, a priority of the Florida House of Representatives. The 2008 budget includes \$1.5 million to pay for start-up costs.

The Cover Florida Plan offers health insurance to Floridians who are uninsured. Under the plan, private insurers will negotiate with the state to develop coverage options that include fewer benefits. Insurers who participate in the program will be required to guarantee coverage to adults ages 19 to 64 regardless of pre-existing medical conditions. Insurers will be required to provide coverage for annual physician visits, inpatient hospital stays, mammograms, prostate screenings, preventative services, screenings, office visits, outpatient and inpatient surgery, urgent care, prescription drugs, durable medical equipment and diabetic supplies. Premiums for coverage will be approximately \$150 or less per month. Individuals can purchase supplemental coverage for vision, dental and cancer coverage. The plan will offer both catastrophic and non-catastrophic health coverage. The plan does not require mandates or force employers to provide health coverage for their employees.

The Florida Health Choices Program aims to expand Floridians' access to affordable health insurance coverage. The program is designed as a marketplace where individuals can pick and choose their health insurance coverage. Created and administered by the Florida Health Choice Corporation, a private entity, the program will offer options and an assortment of benefit packages. Only insurers and HMOs licensed by the Office of Insurance Regulation can sell these health insurance policies, limited benefit policies and other risk-bearing coverage. Insurance coverage through this program will be portable, meaning employees can take their coverage with them when they leave their place of employment.

Managed Care Contracting: Passed

SB 1012 (Enrolled) and HB 405 by Senator Don Gaetz (R-Fort Walton Beach) and Representative Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton) require managed care companies to accept a valid assignment of benefits and pay in-network physicians directly when the services are provided in-network or as part of a PPO; reduce the "look back" period where managed care companies can demand repayment from 30 months to 12 months; and expand the disclosure requirements of "silent" PPOs. This bill was supported by organized medicine.

Physical Education in Public Schools: Passed

SB 610 (Enrolled) and HB 1163 by Senator Lee Constantine (R-Altamonte Springs) and Representative Chris Dorworth (R-Heathrow) requires each district school board to include in its written physical education policy the benefits of physical education and the availability of counseling to explain the benefits. Representative Don Davis (R-Jacksonville Beach), the sponsor of similar legislation, passed away in early April after a long illness. To honor the late lawmaker, the Senate adopted an amendment to the bill, citing the act as the "Don Davis Physical Education Act."

By the beginning of the 2009-10 school year, district school boards are required to provide the equivalent of one class period per day of physical education for one semester of each year for students enrolled in grades six through eight. This requirement may be waived for students who are enrolled in a remedial course or if parents request a waiver in certain circumstances. SB 610 awaits approval by the Governor, and was supported by the FAFP.

School Breakfast Programs: Passed

SB 1456 and HB 623 (Enrolled) by Senator Stephen Wise (R-Jacksonville) and Representative Will Kendrick (R-Carrabelle) authorize district school boards to implement school breakfast programs in middle and high school. Under current law, breakfast is available to all students in elementary schools.

Under the legislation, each district school board is encouraged to provide universal, free school breakfast meals to all students in each elementary, middle and high school who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. By the beginning of the 2010-11 school year, each district school board, after receiving public testimony, may decide whether or not to adopt this policy. HB 623, supported by the FAFP, awaits approval by the Governor.

101st Family Medicine Weekend!

Join Us As We Conclude The FAFP's 60th Anniversary Celebration At The 101st Family Medicine Weekend The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island

December 12-14, 2008

- Outstanding CME makes it valuable.
- Group rates of \$179 make it affordable.
- Holiday setting makes it festive.
- Florida residency reunions make it fun.
- Your presence makes it complete!

Tobacco Education Program: No Change in Law

This year the House and Senate proposed legislation that would amend the allocation process for tobacco education dollars.

The House proposal (HB 5091) expanded the purpose of the Statewide Tobacco Education Program to include interventions to “detect, prevent and treat tobacco-related chronic diseases.” The expansion would allow for the allocation of \$11 million for chronic disease prevention, detection and treatment programs at both the Moffitt and Shands Cancer Centers. Also under the proposal, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) would have created a statewide program that utilized physicians and dentists to deliver brief advice to their patients regarding the harmful health conditions associated with the use of tobacco.

The Senate proposal (SB 1856) did not contain these provisions and instead lifted a two-year “sunset” of smoking cessation initiatives being performed by Area Health and Education Centers (AHECs).

The Senate and House were unable to reach a compromise on the proposals during the budget conference process. As a result, no changes in law were adopted, and the program was funded at \$54 million.

Cigarette Tax Increase: Died

SB 2790 and HB 299 by Senator Ted Deutch (D- Delray Beach) and Representative Jim Waldman (D-Coconut Creek) proposed an increase to the cigarette tax by one dollar per pack. Both bills targeted revenue from the increase to fund numerous health-related programs such as the Medically Needy Program, Medicaid Physician Reimbursement, Children’s Health Insurance and others.

Advocates for the cigarette tax increase, including the FAFP, actively promoted its passage; however, legislators were not persuaded and the bills never gained traction. Governor Crist remained vocal in his opposition.

ARNP Prescribing Expansion: Died

SB 972 and HB 515 by Senator Burt Saunders (R-Naples) and Representative Juan Zapata (R-Miami), Vice Chair of the House Healthcare Council, authorized advanced registered nurse practitioners (ARNPs) whose practice is located in medically underserved areas, or who provide care to medically underserved populations (as designated by the United States Department of Health and Human Services), to prescribe Schedule II, III, IV and V substances. These bills were filed at the urging of the ARNPs. Most of organized medicine, including the FAFP, opposed this legislation. Neither bill received a committee hearing this year.

Electronic Health Records: Died

SB 1998 and HB 637 by Senator Jeremy Ring (D-Margate) and Representative Denise Grimsley (R-Sebring) created the Florida e-Health Initiative Act to promote and coordinate the establishment of a secure, interconnected statewide health information exchange, a matching grant program for eligible health information organizations and a loan program for eligible physicians to implement an electronic medical records system. Despite moving through the committee process, the bills did not pass.

Emergency Medical Certification: Died

SB 1184 and HB 509 by Senator Burt Saunders (R-Naples) and Representative Paige Kreegel (R-Punta Gorda) prohibited physicians and osteopathic physicians who complete their certification after January 1, 2009 from becoming board-certified emergency physicians unless certain requirements are satisfied. The bills were opposed by the American Association of Physician Specialists (AAPS).

Don’t Miss The Boat!

Take A Fall Cruise To New England & Canada With Family Physician Colleagues And Friends

October 4-11, 2008

FAFP sets sail from Boston Saturday, October 4, 2008, aboard Royal Caribbean’s *Jewel of the Seas* cruising to Portland and Bar Harbor, Maine, to St. John, New Brunswick, and Halifax, Nova Scotia, in Canada, returning to Boston Saturday, October 11, 2008.

University At Sea can answer your trip-related questions and handle all arrangements and registrations for you. Call them at 1-800-422-0711.

The Florida Academy of Family Physicians and FAFP Foundation are happy to provide you this opportunity to get away and to earn AMA Category 1 as well as AAFP and Florida Prescribed Credits.

For More Information, Contact:

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Florida Academy of Family Physicians



Join FAFP's 60th Anniversary celebration in 2008!

Connect with colleagues and friends to celebrate more than half a decade representing family medicine.

■ 2008 Summer Breakaway

June 12-15, Naples Grande Resort & Club

In addition to this look at FAFP's past, present and future, we invite past award recipients to be recognized for their many contributions to the family medicine specialty.

■ FAFP's Canada & New England Cruise Getaway

October 4-11, Port of Boston

Call colleagues and friends to join you for this week-long vacation and CME event.

■ 101st Family Medicine Weekend

December 12-14, The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island

See old friends and classmates, thank faculty and other mentors for their contributions and show your pride in the institutions that made you a family physician.



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