



STATE FORECASTS BUDGET SHORTFALLS

The state's Revenue Estimating Conference met earlier this week to forecast the availability of general revenues for the Legislature to prepare this year's budget. Unfortunately, the results show about \$956.3 million in reduced revenues. Projected collections for fiscal year 2006-2007 were revised downwards by \$303.4 million and for fiscal year 2007-2008, expected revenues were decreased by \$652.9 million. These reductions can be attributed to reduced sales tax collections due to the housing construction slow down and reduced collections of documentary stamps. Corporate income tax collections are stabilizing after experiencing an unprecedented growth over the last two years and insurance premium tax collections have been fine-tuned to account for the recent legislation affecting property insurance rates.

The Legislature will face a difficult task this year as many interested stakeholders will be competing for the limited pot of dollars available for allocations. The FDA staff will continue all efforts to make sure attention is brought to our top three funding priorities: increased funding for Medicaid dental fees, funding for the student loan repayment program for dental graduates and expanding the foreign-trained dental program.

MEDICAID DENTAL FEE INCREASE

The Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee was presented with the results of the Medicaid Impact Conference held last Friday. The Conference reported on four different scenarios as it relates to Medicaid dental fee increases:

- 10% increase = \$8,427,819
- 20% increase = \$17,167,203
- 30% increase = \$26,184,342
- 40% increase = \$35,479,234

These figures will be used as the Legislature determines whether or not to provide an increase in Medicaid dental fees. The FDA will continue to monitor this issue closely.

AMENDMENT RELIEVES FDAS FROM BURDENSOME AUDIT

Current law requires Florida Dental Association Services, Inc. (FDAS) to file an audited financial statement with the Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) based on a calendar year. This provision of law

results in FDAS paying for two separate audits, one to coincide with the FDA's fiscal year then again to comply with the statutorily mandated calendar year audit.

Rep. Mike Grant (R-Port Charlotte) amended HB 837 to exempt FDAS and any other similarly situated entity from having to conduct the calendar year financial audit. HB 837 as amended received unanimous approval from the House Insurance Committee and will be considered next by the Jobs and Entrepreneurship Council. Its Senate companion, SB 2198, is being sponsored by Sen. Don Gaetz (R-Niceville).



BILL PROPOSES MALPRACTICE INSURANCE RATE ROLL BACK

There are bills filed for the 2007 session that would have a huge impact on the Medical Malpractice Insurance market; SB 1660 by Sen. Durell Peaden (R-Crestview) and HB 1547 by Rep. Greg Evers (R-Milton). As of today, neither bill has been heard by a committee.

These bills make several changes in present law, including a mandatory rate roll-back of malpractice policies including dental. The bills require a rate roll back of 25% of the rates that were in affect on October 2004, which could be as high as 40% for some policies, according to First Professionals Insurance Company (FPIC).

The bill has several other changes including:

- requiring full disclosure of insurance information with price comparisons of other companies;
- adding consumer protection laws to this line of insurance;
- deleting existing law which allowed an insurer to require an insured to be a member in good standing with a professional society; and
- reporting of claims, for inclusion on the practitioners' profile. Dentists are not presently profiled.

While these bills could benefit dentistry, there are a few issues that may cause some concern. FDA staff will carefully monitor these bills as they proceed through the process.

PHYSICIAN WORKFORCE ASSESSMENT BILL PASSES BOTH HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES

HB 877 by Rep. Ed Homan (R-Temple Terrace) and SB 770 by Sen. Jeff Atwater (R-North Palm Beach) are bills designed to collect information on allopathic (MD) and osteopathic (DO) physicians licensed in Florida. The bills create the Office of Workforce Assessment within the Department of Health (DOH), which will be charged with collecting, analyzing, and maintaining a data bank of information on Florida's current and future physician workforce needs. Information will be gathered from Florida's physicians when they renew their licenses, including whether they deliver babies, do mammograms, take emergency room duties, plan to leave the state or retire within the next five years.

Failure to provide this information within 90 days of renewing their (MDs and DOs) license will result in a non-disciplinary citation and probable fine; however, their license would still be renewed. Failure to provide this information on the second renewal would be grounds for denying their renewal.

HB 877 passed the Committee on Health Quality without any mention of dentists. However, SB 770, which passed the Senate Health Regulation Committee, sparked discussion of possible inclusion of dentists, podiatrists and chiropractors. FDA lobbyists will continue to monitor the bill very closely.

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND KIDCARE

The Senate Health Policy Committee adopted a proposed committee bill (PCB) to SB 930 by Sen. Mandy Dawson (D-Ft. Lauderdale) that restructures the Florida KidCare Program, creates a Commission on Children's Health in the Executive Office of the Governor and creates the Division of Children's Health Insurance and Office of Child Health Coordination in the Department of Health (DOH).



SB 930 renames the Children's Medical Services Program (in DOH) to the Children's Health Program and requires it to consolidate and to coordinate the Florida KidCare child health policy, development of pediatric benefit packages, development of budget and federal and state legislative issues, and development of pediatric quality assurance and access standards.

Additionally, the bill transfers and consolidates most administrative functions in the entire Florida KidCare program under DOH effective July 1, 2008. The bill also repeals the Florida Healthy Kids Corporation effective June 30, 2009. The bill includes many other changes that will help to streamline and expand the program for eligible recipients.

SB 930 includes a provision that exempts children enrolled in the Florida KidCare program from being part of Medicaid reform. The bill will be heard next in the Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee.

The House Healthy Families Committee workshopped the issues, concerns and recommendations to simplify the Florida KidCare program. A bill has not been officially filed, but it appears that there will be many similar issues addressed in the House proposed committee bill that are addressed in SB 930. However, the House may be more amendable to setting up a program to provide more of a universal health care plan.

HOUSE MINORITY LEADER PROPOSES BASIC DENTAL CARE FOR ALL CHILDREN

The House Minority Leader, Rep. Dan Gelber (D-Miami Beach), filed House Joint Resolution (HJR) 1237 for consideration in the 2007 Legislative Session. The Joint Resolution seeks to add the following to the State's Constitution:

"Adequate provision shall be made by general law to guarantee that every child in the state has available, assessable, and affordable comprehensive, quality health care, including basic dental and vision care, effective no later than July 1, 2010."

Rep. Gelber explained to FDA lobbyists that the issue was important to the House Democrats, and although passage is unlikely in the 2007 session, it would be pursued in the 2008 Session. If the Legislature were to approve HJR 1237, it would then be voted upon by the general electorate of the state. House Democrats are pondering the idea of pursuing the signature collection process for placing the issue on the general election ballot. Given the significant nature of the issue being placed in the Florida Constitution, Rep. Gelber has been invited to address the FDA at this year's Dentists' Day on the Hill.

ORAL SURGEONS CONVERGE ON CAPITOL TO DISCUSS DENTAL ISSUES

The Florida Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (FSOMS) held its annual day on the hill this week. Their targeted issues included support for a study concerning the medical necessity, costs and efficacy of mandating coverage for treatment of certain craniofacial anomalies. Sen. Larcenia Bullard (D-Miami) has filed SB 16 and Rep. Ed Bullard (D-Miami) filed HB

161 to address these issues. FSOMS also lobbied legislators in support of Medicaid fee increases and in opposition to the dental lab bill.

REGISTER FOR DENTISTS' DAY TODAY

Dentists' Day on the Hill is on Tuesday, April 17 and Wednesday, April 18 in Tallahassee. You must register **today** in order to be guaranteed a confirmation packet. Confirmation packets will be mailed to registrants on Monday, March 19. The confirmation packet will include the following material:

- registration confirmation letter
- updated legislative issues
- schedule of events
- downtown map
- capitol security information
- legislative directory
- sheet on "How to Meet with Legislator"

If you have never participated in Dentists' Day on the Hill, now is the time! You will have the opportunity to learn about legislative issues that impact organized dentistry and then join your colleagues in meeting with the lawmakers that govern your profession. You do not have to be "politically active" to attend this event. You will find that your legislators will be happy to see you because you are their constituent and you made an effort to travel to the Capitol to show your support for your profession. Former Senator Fred Dudley (R-Cape Coral) described your clout this way: "My favorite lobbyists? Each one of them can vote for me...they are my constituency."

For more information on Dentists' Day on the Hill or to register, call the FDA Governmental Affairs Office at (800) 326-0051 or visit the FDA's web site at <http://floridadental.org/pro/members/governmental/hill.html>.

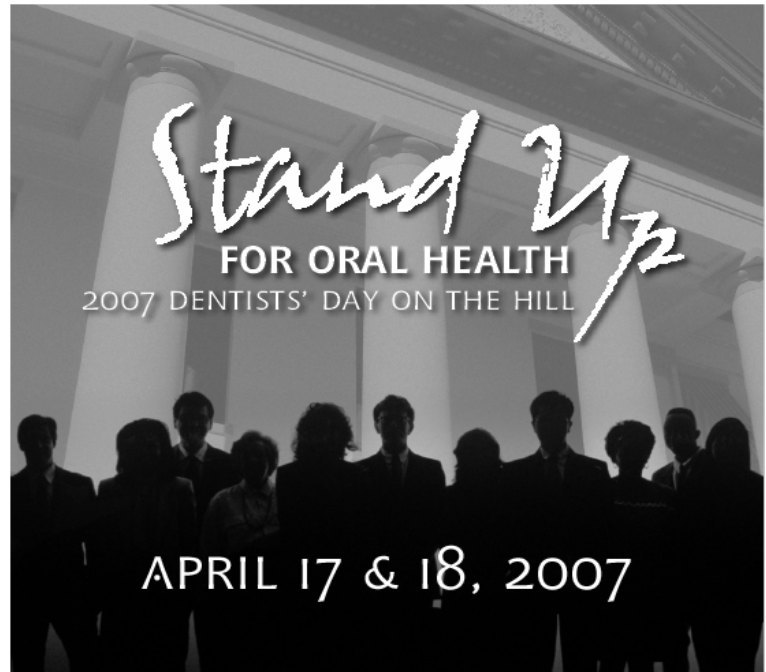
LEGISLATOR SPOTLIGHT

Rep. Michael Grant (R-Port Charlotte) was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2004. He represents Charlotte, Lee and Sarasota Counties. He serves as chair of the Select Committee on Collective Bargaining and is a member of the Economic Development Committee, Government Efficiency & Accountability Council, Urban & Local Affairs Committee, Healthy Families Committee and Policy & Budget Council.



Rep. Grant is helping the FDA by sponsoring an amendment to his bill, HB 837. This amendment will correct a dual financial auditing problem for the FDA's third party administrator, Florida Dental Association Services, Inc.

Rep. Grant's legislative contact dentist (LCD) is Dr. Carol Stevens of Port Charlotte.



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