



FLURRY OF ACTIVITY SURROUNDS CAPITOL THIS WEEK

The corridors of the Capitol were cramped this past week as several groups visited Tallahassee for their day on the hill. The House of Representatives wrapped up most of its committee work and both chambers released initial budget draft proposals. Although the House concluded its regularly scheduled committee work this week, the councils will continue to work throughout the next several weeks on bills, while committees may conduct additional business at the discretion of the House Speaker.

House Councils prepared their initial budgets. As expected, the Health and Human Services Budget reflected the reality of several justifiable requests competing for limited dollars (see articles below for specifics on dental budget issues). The Senate also began preparing its budget proposals which reflected limited opportunities for substantial growth in programs.

In short, dentistry continues to fair well in the 2007 Legislative Session. Issues such as the relaxation of licensure laws, increased regulation of dental labs and scope expansion have not been considered. Major funding issues such as Medicaid fee increases for dentists and physicians continue to escape us, while funding priorities such as expanding educational opportunities for foreign-trained dentists and student loan repayments for dental graduates received initial approval.

FUNDING FOR FDA BUDGET PRIORITIES

Despite the bleak outlook of this year's budget forecast, the Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee, chaired by Sen. Durell Peaden (R-Crestview), allocated \$250,000 for the student loan repayment program for dental graduates. This issue was funded as a part of the community budget issue requests (CBIR). Sen. Peaden filed the student loan repayment CBIR on behalf of the FDA.

Unfortunately, no funding was set aside for Medicaid dental fee increases. It appears that neither the House nor the Senate provided Medicaid fee increases for any providers.

The House Healthcare Council budget proposal was also presented this week. The proposal did not provide funding for Medicaid dental fee increases or student

loan repayment program for dental graduates. After a brief meeting with Healthcare Council chairman, Rep. Aaron Bean (R-Fernandina Beach), the FDA was encouraged that the House will be willing to fund the student loan repayment program at the Senate recommended level during the budget conference.

HOUSE AND SENATE SEEKS FINANCIAL BOOST FOR FOREIGN-TRAINED DENTAL PROGRAM

Chairman of the House Schools and Learning Council, Rep. Joe Pickens (R-Palatka), released his education spending plan this week. It contains \$500,000 to expand the foreign-trained dental program at Nova University. This is a funding priority of the FDA and was requested by Rep. Anitere Flores (R-Miami). Sen. Evelyn Lynn (R-Daytona Beach), chair of Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee, also appropriated \$500,000 for expansion of the program.

Expansion of the program guarantees that actual opportunities exist for graduates of non-accredited dental schools to meet the statutory licensure requirements.

TOBACCO EDUCATION AND PREVENTION BILL



PCB HCC 07-02 is a tobacco education and prevention bill recently proposed and passed by the House Healthcare Council. This bill implements the 2006 constitutional amendment to require 15% of the tobacco settlement monies be spent on prevention and education. Because of the strong urging of our own Rep. Alan Hays (R-Umatilla), smokeless tobacco was included in the definition of a tobacco product.

The bill creates an advisory council and a competitive grant/contract award program. The Secretary of Health (or newly named State Surgeon General), in consultation with the advisory council, would award grants and contracts based on merit through a competitive peer review process.

The Senate bill, CS/SB 1126 by Sen. Peaden was recently amended to include smokeless tobacco in the definition of tobacco products.

BILL THAT WOULD REQUIRE DENTISTS TO REPORT UNDERAGE PREGNANCIES ARGUED IN COMMITTEE

Rep. Dennis Baxley (R-Ocala) and Sen. Ronda Storms (R-Tampa) filed legislation requiring all health care providers to report to local law enforcement if a girl under the age of 16 is pregnant. The legislation (HB 1465) was workshopped at the House Health Quality Committee. Rep. Baxley explained that it was not his intent to create adverse negative consequences, and that he was willing to work with the FDA to remove dentists from the requirements of the bill. The FDA will work with Rep. Baxley should his bill come to the committee for a vote.

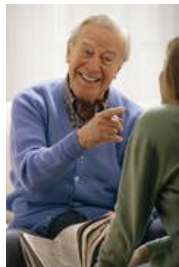
UNINSURED PRICING BILL STALLS IN SENATE

Sen. Bill Posey (R-Rockledge) filed a bill attempting to limit the amount a hospital could charge an uninsured person whose family had a yearly net income of under \$125,000. It would only allow the provider, physician, and hospital to charge this uninsured person the highest amount that they receive for that same service from an insurance contract.

As drafted, it was unclear as to whom the bill would affect. The FDA had concerns that this would apply to dental practices. An amendment was offered in the Senate Health Care Regulation Committee that clarified it only applied to hospital billings. After the amendment was adopted, a motion was made to delay consideration of the bill. There is a House bill, (HB 1513) by Rep. Sandy Adams (R-Oviedo), which has not had a committee hearing.

HOUSE AND SENATE AGREE TO MAKE FLORIDA SENIOR CARE VOLUNTARY

Last year, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) received approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to implement a managed, integrated long-term care program for senior services. The initial waiver would have piloted this program in two areas of the state, the Panhandle (Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton Counties) and Central Florida (Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties). The Panhandle was identified for mandatory enrollment, while Central Florida would have allowed for voluntary participation.



This week, the House Healthcare Council approved a proposed committee bill (PCB HCC 07-12) that will require the pilot project to be implemented on a voluntary basis and be piloted in AHCA Area 7 (Orange and Seminole Counties) and AHCA Area 11 (Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties).

The bill outlines other administrative changes including a provision that would remove the auto-assignment requirement should an individual fail to choose to enroll in the program. SB 2450 by Sen. Peaden has not been heard in committee and also makes Florida senior care voluntary.

In order for AHCA to implement these pilots, direct authority must be granted by the Legislature. With the passage of this bill, authority will be granted to the Agency to move forward with Florida Senior Care with specified changes outlined in the bills. The FDA will continue to monitor the progress of this legislation.

KIDCARE BILL DISCUSSED IN HEALTHY FAMILIES

The House Healthy Families Committee, chaired by Rep. Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton), workshopped the Florida KidCare proposed committee bill, PCB HCC 07-04. The bill is different than the bill filed by the Senate. The bill makes major changes to the administrative structure of the program, as well as changes to certain eligibility requirements. The bill gives the Department of Children and Families (DCF) the authority to develop and implement outreach programs through the Community Access Network (CAN), develop a simplified application process and coordinate with the Florida Healthy Kids Corporation (FHK) to establish a seamless eligibility process for children regardless of funding source. The bill eliminates the KidCare Coordinating Council, which includes two dentists. The bill maintains the FHK and authorizes the Corporation to develop and implement a statewide marketing program to promote the KidCare program. Additionally, FHK will provide comprehensive choice counseling to assist families. The bill provides for year-round enrollment and has opened up the program to state employees and migrant children. The bill will be heard next in the House Healthcare Council and will be given an official bill number.

SB 930 by Sen. Mandy Dawson (D-Ft. Lauderdale) has been re-referenced to the Senate Governmental Operations Committee. (See last week's Capital Report for details on SB 930).

BILLS CREATE STATE SURGEON GENERAL

HB 1343 by Rep. J.C. Planas (R-Miami) and SB 2260 by Sen. Durell Peaden (R-Crestview) passed out of committees this week. These bills rename the "Secretary of the Department of Health" as the "State Surgeon General." This was a priority of Governor Charlie Crist during his campaign. Other issues contained in the bill include:

- detailing the Surgeon General's new role, such as being the leading voice on wellness and disease-prevention and advocating healthy lifestyles, developing public health policy, and building collaborative partnerships with

schools, businesses and health care practitioners; and

- requiring the State Surgeon General focus on assessing and addressing the adequacy of the physician and health professional workforce in meeting the health care needs of this state's residents and visitors.

DENTISTS' DAY CONFIRMATION PACKETS MAILED

The 11th annual Dentists' Day on the Hill is on Tuesday, April 17 and Wednesday, April 18 in Tallahassee. Currently, there are 128 FDA member-dentists registered. In comparison to registration numbers in the past, we have a low number of dentists registered this year. The goal is for 200 dentists to attend Dentists' Day. The more dentists we have attending this important event, the more the voice of organized dentistry will be heard among lawmakers.



Those dentists who registered for Dentists' Day on or before Friday, March 16 were mailed a registration confirmation packet. The confirmation packet included the following:

- confirmation letter
- updated FDA legislative issues
- updated schedule of events
- downtown map
- sheet on "How to Meet with Your Legislator or Legislative Aide on Dentists' Day"
- Downtown Tallahassee Visitor's Brochure

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

IMPAIRED PRACTITIONERS BILL MOVES FORWARD

HB 739 by Rep. Doug Holder (R-Sarasota) passed the House Committee on Health Quality. The bill changes to the impaired practitioners program. This bill, as amended, allows dental students to participate in the program under certain situations and grants sovereign immunity to the program and its consultants. It will go to the House Healthcare Council next. A similar bill, SB 2096, by Sen. Peaden, has not been heard yet in committee.

PHARMACISTS - FLU SHOTS

Pharmacists would be able to give flu shots under a bill approved by a Senate committee this week. It passed despite the strong objection of doctors who say pharmacists are not adequately trained and may not know what to do if someone has an adverse reaction. This is a major scope of practice battle and has been around for several years.



SB 2022 by Sen. Mike Bennett (R-Bradenton) has passed the Senate in the past, but never through the House. The measure would not require pharmacists to give flu shots, but allow them the opportunity with additional training. They would have to be under a protocol and a set of guidelines established by a supervisory physician. However, the doctor would not have to be on the premises when the shots are given.

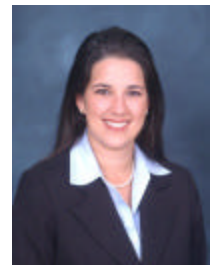
A similar bill HB 543, by Rep. Juan Zapata (R-Miami), passed its first committee, Health Innovation. The House bill not only allows pharmacists to offer flu shots, but allows immunizations as well.

REPRESENTATIVE DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER

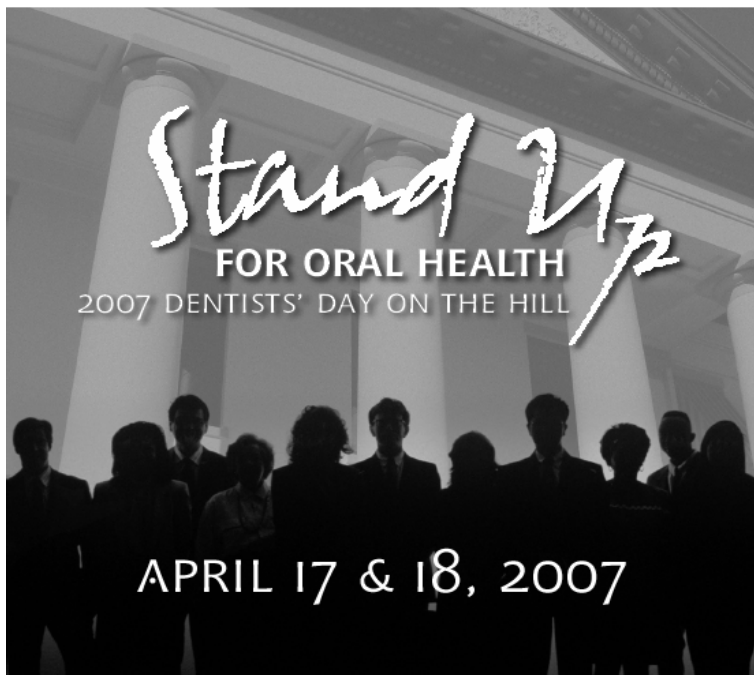
Rep. Stan Mayfield (R-Vero Beach) was recently diagnosed with esophageal cancer. He was hospitalized late last week with flu like symptoms. Tests later then revealed the cancer. Rep. Mayfield's district office remains open. Our thoughts and prayers are with Rep. Mayfield and his family.

LEGISLATIVE SPOTLIGHT

Rep. Anitere Flores (R-Miami) was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2004 and was re-elected in 2006. She currently serves as Chair of the K-12 Committee and is a member of the Utilities & Telecommunications Committee, Constitution & Civil Law Committee, Schools & Learning Council, Government Accountability Committee and Legislative Sunset Advisory Committee.



Rep. Flores has been instrumental in gaining funding for the expansion of the foreign-trained dentist program at Nova Southeastern University School of Dental Medicine. Rep. Flores' legislative contact dentist (LCD) is Dr. Beatriz Terry of Miami.



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