

Idaho Academy of Family Physicians 2018 Legislative Report Week 4 January 29 – February 2

Unemployment Insurance Tax reduction signed into law:

UPDATE: Governor Otter signed this bill into law on Wednesday morning this week. It is the first bill of the 2018 legislative session to become law.

Anyone who pays unemployment insurance taxes will see a reduction in that tax beginning January 1, 2018. It is estimated to reduce employer's unemployment taxes approximately 30% over a three-year period beginning in 2018.

Given the state of the economy and low unemployment rates over the last few years, the trust fund that collects this unemployment tax is flush with money as fewer unemployment claims have been made. Directors of the fund believe this reduction is sustainable into the foreseeable future without risking the fund balance.

New version of dual waiver "Idaho Health Care Plan" introduced (HB 464):

Given the skittish nature in which the dual waiver plan was received by the legislature it is not too surprising that a new version of the bill has been introduced ([H464](#)). The new version adds a work requirement for certain individuals receiving Medicaid benefits, and sunsets the permissive nature of the law in the event the waiver is not approved by the federal government.

A hearing on this bill will be held by House Health and Welfare Committee on Wednesday, February 7 beginning at 8 am in the Lincoln Auditorium.

The waiver being pursued by the Department of Insurance would allow an estimated 35,000 people who currently don't qualify, to receive subsidies for the purchase of health insurance through the Idaho exchange. A concurrent federal waiver being sought by the Department of Health and Welfare would allow some of the more chronically ill individuals to be moved to Medicaid for their coverage options. The Department estimates between 2500-3500 individuals could qualify in this scenario.

Assuming the waivers are indeed granted, the estimated cost for this program is about \$29 million (Governor Otter recommended utilizing \$17.4 million of general fund money and \$11.4 million from the Millennium Fund to cover this cost).

Rural Physician Incentive Program (RPIP) matching funds bill introduced (HB 472):

Rep. John VanderWoude introduced the bill in House Health and Welfare Committee on Wednesday this week. The bill would allow for the state to provide a financial match to the RPIP program in the amount of \$640,000, subject to an appropriation by the Joint Finance and Appropriation Committee.

The Idaho Medical Association is taking the lead on this initiative. Their original concept was to use this session to introduce the concept and pursue the matching funds in the 2019 legislative session, but a number of legislators would like to pursue those matching funds in this year's session.

Currently RPIP is funded through fees paid by students through the WWAMI and University of Utah state supported seats. It is a debt repayment program for physicians who practice primary care in a federally designated health profession shortage area. Up to \$100,000 of repayment over a four year period can be allowed.

Graduate Medical Education Ten-Year Plan:

Update: No new formal legislative action to report on this issue this week, although there is plenty of behind the scenes work being done with JFAC members to fund the first year of the plan.

A total additional funding request of \$5.2 million this year would be used to expand the Boise Internal Medicine Residency Program; Expand the Psychiatry Residency Program; and enhance the salaries paid to those residents and the Family Medicine residents in Idaho; additional funds would be used to lay the foundation for new residency programs at Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center and Bingham Memorial Hospital.

Governor Otter did not include full funding of the first year of the plan in his budget – including only a total of \$1.1 million toward the plan in his recommendation. The JFAC committee members now hold the key to determining the level of funding for this first year of the plan in FY19. Dr. Epperly, the Idaho Medical Association, and others are working hard to convince those legislators of the value of this first, important step.

Committee Actions

HB 465: Medicaid Dental Care

This bill introduced this week by Rep. Ilana Rubel would restore preventative dental care services for a certain population of Medicaid recipients. This program was cut during the recessionary years and her goal is to reinstate it. The expected cost for the program is \$1.2 million.

HB 353: Immunity for Physician Volunteers

UPDATE: This bill passed the House overwhelmingly on Monday this week and is now awaiting action by the Senate Health and Welfare Committee.

This bill will provide additional immunity for physicians and other healthcare providers who volunteer at community screening events. Currently, many physicians' professional liability insurance does not cover them for volunteer screening events offsite from their regular practice. To encourage more volunteerism, IMA is seeking limited immunity for volunteer activities.

HB 451: Medical Residency Charitable Tax deduction

This bill passed out of the House Revenue and Taxation Committee on Thursday with no opposition and awaits full House action.

Rep. Mat Erpelding introduced in this bill that would provide an income tax credit for charitable contributions made to accredited Idaho-based medical residency programs.

Reminder: Idaho Board of Pharmacy Pharmacist Prescribing Protocols:

The Board of Pharmacy is hosting a meeting to develop protocols to guide pharmacist prescribing practices and physicians are invited to participate. The meeting will be **Wednesday, February 7, from 6:00-8:00 pm**, at the Idaho Board of Pharmacy, [1199 Shoreline Lane, 3rd Floor](#).

If at any point you would like to have more detail on any of these items, beyond these short descriptions, we would be happy to provide those for you.

We will continue to track issues that directly affect IAFP.

Ken Burgess
Veritas Advisors, LLP