

**Idaho Academy of Family Physicians
2018 Legislative Report
Week 2 January 15 – January 19**

The second week of the Legislative session has been filled with budget discussions/projections, continuing rules reviews in most committees, and

Unemployment Insurance Tax reduction on the fast track:

Anyone who pays unemployment insurance taxes will likely see a reduction in that tax beginning January 1, 2018. This first bill of the session has already passed the House unanimously and by the time you read this note will likely have been passed by the Senate and sent to the Governor for signature. It is estimated to reduce employer's unemployment taxes approximately 30% over a three year period beginning in 2018.

"Idaho Health Care Plan" dual waiver bill introduced

The plan to pursue federal waivers to partially address the uninsured issue was introduced this week in House Health and Welfare Committee. It is now **House Bill #338**, and Chairman Fred Wood is scheduling a public hearing on the matter for **Wednesday, January 24 at 11:00 am in the Lincoln Auditorium of the Capitol.**

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) presentation:

The Senate Health and Welfare Committee heard a presentation from Mary Sheridan of the Department of Health and Welfare, Susie Puliot of the Idaho Medical Association and Margret Wiles of the National Conference of State Legislatures on rural Physician incentives. They will give this same presentation to the **House Health and Welfare Committee on Tuesday, January 23.** As many of you know, the current RPIP is funded through fees paid by students through the WWAMI and University of Utah students. The Idaho Medical Association is seeking state matching dollars for this program. 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. Given the physician shortage challenge in rural Idaho, the IMA is in the process of drafting legislation for state matching funds for this incentive program.

Health and Welfare Committee actions

Idaho Board of Pharmacy Pharmacist Prescribing Protocols:

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

HB 353: Immunity for Physician Volunteers

IMA introduced legislation to 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. This bill is scheduled for a hearing in House Health and Welfare Committee on Thursday, Jan 25.

We will continue to track issues that directly affect primary care and rural health providers.

Ken Burgess
Veritas Advisors, LLP