

Idaho Academy of Family Physicians

Legislative Update - Week 11

The Week Ending March 21, 2014

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Last week marked the end of the 2014 Legislative session, which proved to be the quickest session, ending in 74 days, since 2004. Education issues including school improvement and increasing the education budget as well as the Justice Reinvestment Act proved to be the largest issues that enjoyed widespread support and enactment.

One of the most important issues to the healthcare community, **Medicaid Expansion**, was a topic of discussion throughout the session. The Arkansas model which focuses on securing private insurance for newly eligible seems to be gaining traction and it seems to be a given that some sort of legislation tackling the expansion of Medicaid and the Catastrophic Fund will be a priority during next year's session.

In particular, **graduate medical education** received support from the legislature this year. WWAMI not only received level funding to continue the support of the new TRUST seats and the existing seats but five more seats have been added to the class to bring the number of seats to 30. The University of Utah program will see stipends for their Idaho preceptors working with the UofU medical students. All of the Idaho residency programs maintained their state funding support for the coming year. The Kootenai Health Family Medicine Residency program will receive state funding to support the new residency program, thanks to the Joint Finance Appropriations Committee.

The IAFP does have reason to celebrate with a good session of bills passing favorably to family physicians. The **Time-Sensitive Emergencies System of Care** legislation passed easily. The law will create a statewide system of care to include blunt trauma injuries, strokes and heart attacks within the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. The legislation addressing violence against physicians and other health care providers passed both the house and the senate and is waiting for the Governor's signature.

The IAFP sponsored **Tar Wars** program will also receive money through the Millennium Fund to help support the tobacco prevention program.

An extension to the sunset of the **midwife licensure statute** passed both the house and the senate. Legislation was passed five years ago to license non-nurse midwives with a sunset clause to prompt the legislature to review the success of the law and whether changes are needed. The legislation re-codifies the non-nurse midwife legislation and provides limited changes to their practice act.

Tele-health received a boost this year. The legislature approved a resolution to convene a group of stakeholders to develop standards and procedures for telehealth in Idaho. The **Immunization Policy Commission** will remain intact. The immunization commission was due to sunset this year but the sunset clause was removed from the legislation so the commission will continue to work on increasing immunization rates in Idaho. Neva represents the IAFP on this commission.

Legislation designed to **attract and retain physicians** and midlevel providers to work at **State Hospitals** in Idaho was passed. The two state hospitals have had struggles filling key positions, the legislature approved legislation for the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare to offer candidates and current employees educational loan repayment. Also, the **Payback Requirement for Medical Education Programs** failed. The legislature defeated a mandatory payback practice provision for Idaho students who attend state-supported medical, dental and veterinary education programs. Several WWAM and University of Utah medical students testified against the bill which, in the end, was defeated.

Two controversial issues, the so called "**Ag Gag**" bill and guns on campus legislation that had many detractors both become law while the "**Add the Words**" bill never got a hearing despite over 100 hundred arrests of protesters throughout the session.

It has been my pleasure to serve as the legislative advisor to the Idaho Academy of Family Physicians over the last two years, but it is time for me to move on into fulfilling my dream of hosting retreats for parents who have experienced the death of child. Kauai Hawaii is a magical place that provides peace, restoration and healing and I am in the process of making the move to Kauai where I have established the non-profit organization, Ohana Oasis, to provide these retreats. Heidi Low