



Legislative Contact Information

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WYOMING MEDICAL SOCIETY

Legislative Update ~ February 14, 2010

2010 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

February 8th marked the first day of the 2010 legislative session. Many of the bills of great importance to WMS kicked-off this year's discussions and your representatives were hard at work advocating for your interests.

MEDICAL REVIEW PANEL SEES CHANGES

The House Labor, Health and Social Services Committee convened Thursday afternoon to discuss proposed amendments to the Medical Review Panel (MRP). The Committee voted to not support an amendment proposed by Rep. Hallinan, MD for a "loser-pays" provision but did support the WMS encouraged amendment to make all discoveries, decisions and proceedings of the panel inadmissible in court. HB 26: Medical review panel passed out of committee and was favorably considered in Committee of the Whole on Friday.

LIABILITY REFORM DEBATE DELAYED

Representative Hallinan, MD intended to carry a resolution to bring a vote to the people to amend the Wyoming Constitution to allow the legislature to enact caps on noneconomic damages. Unfortunately, due to personal health complications, Dr. Hallinan has been unable to participate in the 2010 legislative session and thus unavailable to carry his initiative. Although HJ 6: Noneconomic damages-constitutional amendment did receive a majority of favorable votes (38-20), it still failed introduction due to the 2/3 vote requirement during budget sessions.

MIDWIFE LICENSURE MOVES FORWARD

After nearly 20 years of heated debate and controversy surrounding the practice of midwifery the battle may be coming to a close. WMS and other health related associations who have traditionally opposed this legislation have worked tirelessly to try to resolve differences and find a resolution that provides the physician community as great a level of comfort as possible when it comes to the philosophy of this alternative practice. Wyoming Medical Society advocates have been successful in incorporating more than 12 amendments in the bill to increase patient safety and address standards of care. The bill has a long road ahead and WMS will continue to encourage legislators to consider seriously all aspects of patient care and safety of women and unborn children when

debating this highly controversial measure. WMS members are indebted to the work and incredible service of local Cheyenne Obstetricians and Gynecologists Jacques Beveridge, MD, Renee Hinkle, MD, and LeAyn Dillon, MD as well as Pediatricians Joseph Horam, MD and Brian Horst, MD who testified to the concerns of the bill and worked in a close collaborative group to address potential points for negotiations with the midwife proponents. Thank you to our dedicated physician members who have sacrificed personal time to help WMS advocate physician interests on this issue.

Currently, the bill is awaiting a hearing in the Senate Appropriations Committee to determine funding for the establishment of the licensure board and then will be considered on the Senate floor.

HEALTH FREEDOM ACT STRIKES OUT TWICE

The Wyoming Liberty Group, a Wyoming non-profit group with a mission of pursuing libertarian principles, brought this proposed amendment to the Wyoming Constitution. The amendment had two goals, first to protect the individual's right to choose their own health care and prohibit the federal government from forcing people into any plan. It also prohibited implementation of fines or penalizing individuals who choose not to participate in a government run health care program. Second was to protect the right of individuals to purchase and for doctors to provide lawful medical services without government fines or penalties.

Some groups, such as the Wyoming AARP, claimed the amendment would jeopardize the federal match of Medicaid funding. Other healthcare groups raised concerns that the amendment might make it more difficult to develop solutions to provide health insurance coverage for the uninsured.

After falling two votes short of the needed 20 votes for introduction in the Senate on Tuesday, the Health Care Freedom Amendment failed by the same margin on Thursday afternoon in the House. The vote was 38 in favor of introduction with 19 opposing and three excused. With the exception of Owen Petersen, R-Uinta, who opposed the amendment, the vote was along party lines with Democrats opposing the amendment and Republicans supporting it.

STAY CONNECTED - GET INVOLVED

The 2010 general session has the potential to be an exciting one for WMS. Be sure to stay tuned to the advocacy being delivered on behalf of WMS members and Wyoming health care providers as the session progresses. WMS may call on the membership to weigh in on legislative proposals by emailing or calling your local legislator and sharing your opinion. Watch your email and fax for regular weekly updates detailing the status of important legislative initiatives or asking for membership action and check the WMS website at <http://www.wyomed.org> to review the complete listing of healthcare related bills.

Questions? Contact Executive Director Sheila Bush at the WMS office at 307-635-2424 or info@wyomed.org.