

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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WHA Calendar:

WHA Board Meeting
Casper 3/27

WCAHN— Maximizing Revenue/Reimbursement Opportunity
Casper 4/15

WHA Trustee Educational Meeting
Lander 5/8

Other Events:

AHA Annual Meeting
Washington DC 4/26

HFMA Spring Meeting
Casper 4/30

Trauma Care Bill Survives House Revenue Committee

Unreimbursed care in Wyoming ó more specifically, unreimbursed trauma care ó remained a major focus of the Wyoming Hospital Association's lobbying efforts at the Legislature last week.

And once again, a measure intended to help ease the strain of unreimbursed care moved another step toward passage.

House Bill 244, sponsored by Rep. Roy Cohee, R-Casper, would raise an estimated \$3 million annually to fund unreimbursed trauma care by levying a one-cent-per-gallon increase in the gasoline tax.

After two hearings last week and a concerted lobbying effort, the measure passed the House Revenue Committee by a 6-3 vote. However, it did not exit the committee in the same condition that it entered.

Rather than establishing a permanent funding source, the amended bill would only provide funding from the gasoline tax through 2011. At that point, lawmakers would plan to reconsider the issue to determine whether other permanent funding sources can be identified.

The bill is expected to be heard in the Revenue Committee a third time because of



the tax complexities associated with it.

Amendments so significantly altered another major healthcare bill that its original supporters are now among its opponents. The proposed statewide ban on smoking in public places passed the House of Representatives, but the bill that passed is a mere shadow of the bill that was originally introduced.

Exemptions for bars and restaurants were added to the bill, as was an amendment that would allow cities and counties to opt out of the statewide ban. Amendments offered during the bill's final reading attempted to return it to its original form, but those amendments failed.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

A proposed Constitutional amendment that would have enabled the Legislature to put caps on non-economic damages in

medical liability cases failed to make it out of the House Judiciary Committee last week.

Committee members heard testimony during multiple hearings on a single day, but the measure ultimately failed on a 5-4 vote.

Finally, a proposed healthcare reform pilot project passed the Senate last week, and will now move to the House for debate.

Senate File 24, sponsored by Sen. Charlie Scott, R-Casper, would create a demonstration project to improve access to healthcare in Wyoming, control costs, and promote personal responsibility in healthcare consumption.

Unreimbursed Trauma Care Key Points

- A 2004 Wyoming Healthcare Commission study estimated unreimbursed trauma care at \$25 million annually
- In 2008, the Legislature appropriated \$2.5 million for trauma care, divided into four allotments of \$625,000
- For the first half of 2008, the Department of Health received \$8.4 million in reimbursement requests for the \$625,000 in available money



Don't forget to send us a story about your hospital so we can feature you in our Member Spotlight section!



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New SJMC Logo Conveys Multiple Messages

Often, a logo is so much more than an image. It's a message. A critical element of a hospital's brand.

And with its recent face-lift, the St. John's Medical Center (SJMC) logo offers a new look and communicates a number of important messages.

The new image is meaningful for several reasons," said Karen Connelly, SJMC director of marketing and community outreach, "the

most important of which is reinforcing our connection with our community."

The new logo replaces the familiar roof icon that has been the hospital's logo



for more than 15 years, and it is a contemporary rendition of the Tetons that can also be viewed as three people, arms linked, represent-

ing community and compassion.

In addition to acknowledging the hospital's unique outdoor environment, the modern style of the logo reflects the state-of-the-art environment of care associated with SJMC's services and programs.

The multiple dimensions and interpretations of the new logo also speak to the diversity of St. John's patient base.

WCAHN Urges Congressional Support for Flexibility Act

A measure being simultaneously introduced in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives would provide important flexibility for critical access hospitals in serving the unique needs of their communities.

The Critical Access Hospital Flexibility Act of 2009 would give rural hospitals a choice in how they comply with federal regulations.

Currently, critical access hospitals may have no more than 25 beds occupied by patients at any one time.

That means hospitals must choose, at times, between risking the viability of their hospital or treating a 26th patient.

That can mean sending that patient to the next closest hospital for treatment.

The Critical Access Hospital Flexibility Act of 2009 would allow hospitals to choose either the current 25-bed limit, or an annual average limit of 20 beds per day. As a result, hospitals could care for their communities during times of increased

need and eliminate expensive, time-consuming patient transfers, even if that meant exceeding the use of 25 beds.

Additionally, the measure would not count beds used by veterans against either of these limits.

The Wyoming Critical Access Hospital Network (WCAHN) has issued a call to action to all Wyoming critical access hospitals to contact U.S. Sens. Mike Enzi and John Barrasso and U.S. Rep. Cynthia Lummis and urge them to support the Act.

AHA Annual Meeting to Focus on Reform Agenda

Hospital leaders from across the country will convene in Washington, D.C., to discuss approaches to improving American health and health care.

The 2009 American Hospital Association Annual Meeting is scheduled for April 26 through April 29,

and will focus on the theme "America Together. Forward. Now. Better Health, Better Health Care."

In addition to targeted briefings that will address the issues of Wyoming's small, rural hospitals, the annual meeting will also feature trustee education

presented by James Orlikoff, and executive briefings on clinical integration, health information technology, and hospital capital financing.

Everyone is encouraged to attend the AHA annual meeting. More information is available at www.aha.org.