

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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WHA Calendar:

WHA Board Meeting Lander **5/7**

WHA Trustee Educational Meeting, Lander **5/8**

RAC Presentation Teleconference **5/18**

Hospital Advisory Group Meeting Cheyenne **6/17**

Other Events:

Joint Labor, Health, and Social Services Interim Committee Casper **5/7**

Western Regional Flex Conference Lake Tahoe, NV **6/10**

Wyoming Medical Society Meeting, Sheridan **6/11**

AHA Convention Centers on Healthcare Reform

It's been 15 years since the last major effort to overhaul the healthcare system, but this time, according to healthcare leaders from across the country, the stars appear to be aligned in favor of reform moving through Congress.

The unanswered question is just what that reform will look like.

That's the conclusion from the American Hospital Association annual meeting last week in Washington, D.C. Speaker after speaker suggested that major healthcare reform is urgently needed, and that Democrat control of the White House and Congress makes it likely that something will get done.

And although the general contours of a reform program are beginning to take shape, hospitals and the AHA remain concerned about the details.

There is general agreement, for example, that a reform plan will need to control costs, expand coverage to the uninsured, and resolve reimbursement issues. Additionally, influential Senators agree that a reform plan must address the shortage of primary care physicians.

There is less agreement, however, about the need for a public insurance plan to cover those who cannot ob-

tain private insurance. Generally, Democrats are pushing for a public option, while Republicans are resisting a public plan that would compete with private insurers.

In the middle of that debate is Wyoming Sen. Mike Enzi, who has historically worked across the aisle. A member of the Senate Finance Committee, the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and the Budget Committee, Sen. Enzi is well positioned to positively influence the healthcare debate.

Such influence may be critical to the passage of an enduring reform package. The AHA's advocacy and public policy staff, as well as Sen. Enzi himself, suggested that unless the final reform package passes the Senate with a bipartisan margin of 75 or 80 votes, it is likely to be one-sided and is not likely to earn the support of the American people.

Democrats are currently assumed to have 59 votes in the Senate, and as many as 60 votes if Minnesota seats Democrat Al Franken. A battle is looming, however, over the Democrats' suggestion that they will use reconciliation to

pass healthcare reform if Republicans are unwilling to negotiate.

Under reconciliation, only 51 votes are needed to pass the measure, rather than the typical 60 votes.

In short, reconciliation would allow Democrats to push a healthcare reform measure through the Senate without any Republican votes. And while Democrat leaders have suggested reconciliation as a fallback position, many agree that such an approach would not produce a balanced, enduring reform bill.

Wyoming's delegation to the AHA convention met with Sen. Enzi, as well as Sen. John Barrasso and Rep. Cynthia Lummis last week and urged them to remain open to negotiations to increase the likelihood that a well-crafted bill ultimately will pass.

Work is expected to begin on a bill in June, and lawmakers currently expect to be ready to vote on a reform measure by October.





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

Cheyenne VA Earns Energy Savings Award

The Cheyenne Veterans Affairs Medical center has earned the U.S. Environmental Agency's ENERGY STAR, the national symbol for protecting the environment through superior energy performance.

The Cheyenne VA Medical Center joins approximately 3,200 buildings na-

tionwide that have earned the ENERGY STAR.

The center is using about 35 percent less energy than average buildings, while still providing quality service and comfort to occupants.

The Cheyenne VA lowered its energy costs by making cost-effective improve-

ments to its building and reduced greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.



Barton Honored at AHA Convention as Grassroots Champion

Rod Barton, CEO of Powell Valley Healthcare (PVHC), was officially recognized at the AHA annual meeting in Washington, D.C., last week with the Partnership for Action Grassroots Champion Award.

The award honors hospital leaders who most effectively educate elected officials on how major issues affect hospitals, who have broadened support for the hospital, and who are tireless advocates for hospitals and their patients.

Barton joined the Wyoming delegation at the AHA meeting both to receive his Grassroots Champion recog-

niton, and to participate in the Wyoming Hospital Association's visits to Capitol Hill and discussions with the state's Congressional delegation.

His service to Wyoming hospitals and the patients they treat is extensive. Barton, CEO at PVHC since 1997, was chairman of the WHA board in 2003, was appointed by Gov. Freudenthal to serve on the Wyoming Healthcare Commission, and is a member of the AHA's Regional Policy Board.

He is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, has been named the Powell

Chamber of Commerce Community Builder of the Year, has served as president of the Northwest College School of Nursing Advisory Board, and was a founding member and chairman of the Wyoming Critical Access Hospital Network.

"We are proud that Rod was one of only 50 hospital leaders to be honored by the AHA this year," said Dan Perdue, president of the Wyoming Hospital Association. "He sets an example for us all through his commitment to improving healthcare not only in his community, but across entire state."



Rod Barton
PVHC CEO

Wyoming Hospital Association

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Web-based Tool Offers Communities Information on Swine Flu

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has created a tool that hospitals can plug into their web sites to provide information on what people can do to deal with the spreading swine flu.

The Department is asking hospitals to consider adding this tool to their websites.

This swine flu-specific tool displays tips for community members to protect themselves from the cause and spread of the disease and to create better awareness of related symptoms.

Please contact Steve at the Wyoming Hospital Association for instructions on adding the tool to your web site.

The Wyoming Department of Health, Hospital Preparedness Program has established a hotline at 1-877-683-3316.