



# NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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## WHA Calendar:

Healthcare Effective Communication Webinar	3/12
Wyoming Chapter HFMA Casper	3/19-3/21

## Other Events:

Wyoming Legislative Session Convenes	2/10
ACHE Congress Chicago, IL	3/24-3/27



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## Medicaid Expansion

A legislative committee heard public testimony Wednesday in favor of a bill that would expand Medicaid but didn't vote on the matter.

Sen. Charles Scott, a Casper Republican, said he wouldn't call the Senate Labor, Health and Social Services Committee back into session and he also doubted he would call the committee into session to vote on the bill Thursday, the last day for bills to be reported out of committee.

Scott said the bill sponsor, Sen. Chris Rothfuss, D-Laramie, could still push Medicaid expansion through an amendment to the general government appropriations bill this week.

Rothfuss said he was disappointed by Scott's decision not to bring the bill to a vote.

He said he has drafted a budget amendment for the expansion and intends to bring it up in the Senate on Friday. However, he said he expects that avenue reduces the measure's chances of success because it will receive less time for debate.

The House on Wednesday narrowly defeated a budget bill amendment that mirrored Rothfuss' bill.

Scott said having the same issue coming forward as a budget amendment made him less willing to "drag the committee through that."

Rothfuss' bill calls for Wyoming to accept federal funding to add about 17,600 adults to the state's Medicaid system under the federal Affordable Care Act.

Several witnesses testifying in favor of the bill told lawmakers Wednesday that the program offers their sole hope of receiving adequate medical care.

Among several people testifying for the bill, Sylvia Fonfara, 18, of Laramie, told the committee she has been on the state's Children's Health Insurance Program her whole life. She said she will lose that coverage when she turns 19.

Medicaid expansion is a basic element of the federal Affordable Care Act. The Legislature last year rejected \$50 million in federal funds to expand the program.

Gov. Matt Mead and many legislators said they distrust federal promises to continue to pay the entire cost of the expansion for the first few years. They have said they fear it would be difficult for the state to scale back the program if they let it grow and the federal government later pulls out.

U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-Wyoming, held his annual visit to the Legislature on Wednesday. He serves on the Senate Finance Committee.

In an interview with The Associated Press after his address to lawmakers, Enzi said he has tremendous concerns with the federal government's promise to pay 100 percent of the cost of expanding Medicaid for the first few years of the Affordable Care Act.

"I think they'll do it for a year. I'm a little worried after that," Enzi said. "I'm the accountant, and I know that when they say we're \$17 trillion in the hole, they're fudging. Because the trust funds don't have any money in them. They just have bonds in them."

Two bills sponsored by the Joint Interim Labor, Health and Social Services Committee that would have expanded Medicaid failed their introductory votes in the Legislature. Rothfuss' bill is the last one remaining.

Rothfuss said a study commissioned by the Wyoming Department of Health projects the state would save about \$40 million over the first two years of Medicaid expansion. The department projects the expansion would save money by reducing demand on other health programs.



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



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## Worland Therapist Earns Cessation Treatment Certification

Heather Longwell, RRT, CPT, CTTS is employed at Washakie Medical Center in Worland. Her latter accreditation stands for certified tobacco treatment specialist, which she earned last September when she attended a five-day training in Cheyenne.

Her training was paid for by the Washakie County Tobacco Prevention Program.

The training included learning about the various medicines available to help smokers quit, to counselling and motivation techniques to learning the neurochemistry behind smoking and how people become addicted.

“Cigarette smoking causes about one every five deaths in the United States each year,” said Longwell. “It’s the main preventable cause of death and illness in

the United States.”

Longwell has utilized her tobacco cessation training with her cardiac and pulmonary patients. She has so far been successful in helping three of her patients quit smoking.

“Studies show that the most success with quitting smoking is a combination of medicines and counseling” according to Longwell.

## WY Medicaid Launches Smartphone Program for Pregnancy

Pregnant Wyoming Medicaid clients can now use a first-of-its-kind smartphone application to get helpful health advice and access to healthcare services through a new program offered by the Wyoming Department of Health.

“Due Date Plus” for “WYhealth Get Plugged In” is a new program for Wyoming Medicaid members that combines smartphone-based custom tools and content with click-to-call access to nurse support, as well as access to other Wyoming resources and programs.

Healthcare costs of more than 40 percent of Wyoming pregnancies are paid by Wyoming Medicaid.

Women who use the application can track their pregnancy milestones, use a weight gain calculator, get information on more than 50 risk factors for pregnancy complications, and be referred to a free 24/7 call center staffed by nurses.

Due Date Plus maps out important pregnancy milestones and offers personalized health advice, a weight gain calculator and custom reminders that appear right

on the phone. The Medicaid version is further configured to link to state programs and benefits, Medicaid guidelines and resources such as breastfeeding support and vaccine schedules.

Pregnant women in Wyoming who are not Medicaid clients may use the general version of Due Date Plus to track their pregnancy milestones and receive health information, but they will not have access to the nurse-staffed call line and other Medicaid-specific referral services.

## Two Day Summit on Alzheimer’s Disease

The Rocky Mountain Alzheimer’s Summit is scheduled for June 4&5, 2014, at the Little America conference center in Cheyenne, WY.

A variety of health care professionals provide medical care to people with Alzheimer’s disease, and provide crucial support to their caregivers and families. The majority of this

medical care is in the ambulatory care setting which places a burden on the primary care workforce who care for a diverse patient population.

In addition to sessions on pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic management strategies, the summit will also include presentations on the diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer’s disease

among people with intellectual disability – a segment of the population that may be underserved.

Registration opened on February 1 and is free for and limited to health care professionals and social service providers.

For more information visit: [www.uwyo.edu/geriatrics](http://www.uwyo.edu/geriatrics) or call (307) 766-2829.