

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

Volume 42, Number 10

March 9, 2012

WHA Calendar:

- WHA Board Meeting
Casper, WY **3/16**
- Wyoming Critical Access Hospital Network—
Planning Meeting **3/29**

Other Events:

- HFMA Spring Meeting
Casper, WY **3/21-3/23**
- American Hospital Association Annual Meeting
Washington, DC **5/6-5/9**

Legislature Wraps Up Early, Focuses on Medicaid

The 61st Wyoming Legislature finished its budget session a day early last week, with legislators leaving Cheyenne after approving a \$3.2 billion budget for the biennium that begins July 1.

During the course of its abbreviated budget session, the Legislature considered some 244 bills and joint resolutions, though many died due to their inability to generate the necessary two-thirds support for introduction.

As always during even-numbered years, however, the central focus of the session was the development and approval of the biennial budget.

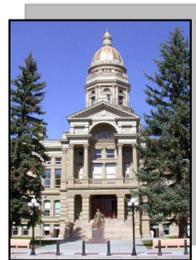
In keeping with the theme pushed by the Joint Appropriations Committee, legislators largely worked to hold budgets flat across state agencies. Natural gas prices continued to plummet, even as legislators considered the budget, and the latest projections indicate prices will continue to drop.

State economists estimate that every \$1 drop in natural gas prices equates to a loss in state revenues of more than \$260 million.

Those conditions created an environment of general austerity during the session. And regarding health issues, those conditions combined

with a loss of federal stimulus funding to create uncertainty about the state's Medicaid program.

Despite some resistance to the idea of replacing lost stimulus funds, legislators agreed to a funding approach for the Department of Health that replaces most of that funding, effectively keeping the Medicaid program whole for the first year of the biennium.



However, department officials will be expected to identify 4 percent budget cuts, or about \$19 million, for the second year of the biennium.

The department is currently working on a plan to identify those cuts. That plan is due to the Governor by November 1.

Meanwhile, a bill that may provide longer-term solutions to containing Medicaid costs passed the Legislature last week as well.

Senate File 34 provides for a study of Medicaid options, including a detailed

look at components of the Medicaid program and innovative delivery options. That study is due by December 1.

Department of Health Director Tom Forslund has said the department expects to deliver its findings from the study in three phases.

The first phase will identify key cost drivers in the Medicaid program. Phase two will identify options for containing costs, and phase three will provide a series of recommendations.

He said the study will include an opportunity for public input. That opportunity will likely occur during the summer.

The Medicaid study will likely occupy a great deal of the Joint Labor, Health, and Social Services Committee's time during the interim as well.

During a hearing last week to identify the committee's priorities for interim study, Sen. Charles Scott, R-Casper, said he expects the committee to focus on understanding the complexities of the program and working on solutions to keep it from eating up larger and larger portions of the state budget.

Mary Lynne Shickich of Wyoming Medical Center and Dan Perdue, WHA President, both offered their resources and support as the committee considers options for reforming the Medicaid program.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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

WHA Honors Nurse for the Day Volunteers

The Wyoming Hospital Association would like to thank the nurses who volunteered for the Nurse for the Day program during the 2012 legislative session and the hospitals and organizations that support them.

Volunteers are stationed in the Medical Aid Station on the third floor of the State Capitol building in Cheyenne during the session.

Typically, they handle routine procedures such as taking blood pressures, or

treating minor cold and flu complaints, headaches, and upset stomachs.

Nurses work in tandem with the Doctor-For-The-Day, a program that is sponsored by the Wyoming Medical Society. Each morning, the nurses are introduced in both the Senate and House chambers.

Volunteers for February were: Jeanne Wernsmann, Wyoming Medical Center; Kim Johnson, Laurie Clark and Barb Bailey, Cheyenne

Regional Medical Center; Mary Kay Goetter, Cynthia LaBonde, and Todd Berger, Wyoming Board of Nursing; Penny Iekel, Sheridan VA; and Anne Raga, Campbell County Memorial Hospital.

March's volunteers were: Cheryl Schnepf, Wyoming Medical Center; Lisa Hulsey, Cheyenne Regional Medical Center; and Kim Glasscock and Rhiannon Sturlaugson, Castle Rock Hospital District.

WWAMI Program Celebrates Twin Anniversaries

From the Wyoming Business Report

WWAMI, the medical education program that is helping train primary care doctors for rural practices in Wyoming and other Northwestern states, is celebrating two anniversaries this year.

The program is marking its 40th anniversary, while Wyoming, the newest state to join the program, is celebrating its 15th anniversary as a member of the consortium with an expanded

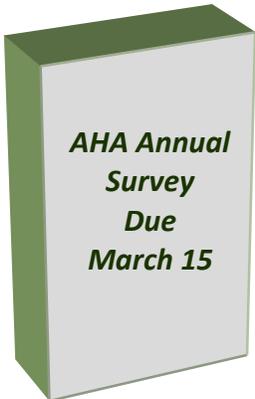
class of 20 medical students.

Some who helped establish the program in Wyoming were honored at a recent luncheon to commemorate the two anniversaries. Drs. Howard Willson of Thermopolis, Tom Spider of Rock Springs and Robert Kanard of Cheyenne were honored for their roles in pushing Wyoming to join the WWAMI.

Wendy Curran, former executive director of the

Wyoming Medical Society, was also honored for her work with Gov. Jim Geringer and the Legislature to establish the program. Ms. Curran also served as a health care advisor to Govs. Dave Freudenthal and Matt Mead.

Wyoming's program has enrolled 183 students so far, including 20 first-year students who started last August. So far, 55 have completed residencies, and of them, 37 have returned to Wyoming.



AHA Annual Survey Due March 15

Webinar to Offer Information on Emergency Planning

Hospitals and public health agencies need to coordinate emergency preparedness planning, training, and exercises.

To help both entities with that effort, a webinar has been scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 19, to provide information on how to address preparedness capabilities, improve awareness, develop contacts, identify resources, and strength-

en information sharing.

The webinar will address a number of key issues, including why it's important for hospitals and public health agencies to share information and plan together. Further, the webinar will identify who should be part of a planning and coordination team.

Attendees will also learn how both entities can plan, train, and exercise together

to improve community awareness, and the benefits of having a county health and medical planning committee.

To register for the webinar, visit <https://wy.train.org> and use course ID 1031292.

With questions, contact Jim Smith at (307) 777-6777, or via email at james.smith5@wyo.gov.

Wyoming Hospital Association

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