

# Idaho Public Health Association LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

January 19, 2010



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Greetings!

As in past years, the Idaho Public Health Association will provide Legislative Updates during the legislative session. With economic recovery issues and health care reform foremost on everyone's mind, the 2010 session will likely be intense.

New this year, Andy Hyer, JD, will be monitoring activity at the Idaho Statehouse and reporting up-to-date information as a [blog](#) on the IPHA website. Andy is a graduate student in the Master of Health Science program at Boise State University.

Andy's blog is reprinted in its entirety in this legislative update, but in the future you'll see a summary of the issues covered, with a link to the full blog. You can leave comments there; Andy will also be reading and responding to the conversations as needed.

You'll receive this Legislative Update each week, with a link to our [website](#) for additional information related to public health. Be sure to check out all the IPHA Policy Committee [pages](#) for helpful advocacy links and updates.

And if you are interested in joining the Policy Committee, which meets the second Thursday of each month at 4:30 in the Health Sciences Building at BSU, please contact committee chair Lynda Westphal, MHS, at 208-724-2894 or [westphal009@hotmail.com](mailto:westphal009@hotmail.com).

*PS: If you know of legislative proposals of interest to the public health community, please leave a comment on the Blog or email Andy directly at [andyhyer@gmail.com](mailto:andyhyer@gmail.com).*

**Idaho State Legislative Update - Public Health Issues on the Horizon at the Statehouse**

*Andy Hyer, JD - Idaho Public Health Association Policy*

*(Week Ending January 15, 2009)*

This week the Idaho State Legislature convened for its 2010 Session. Throughout the duration of this legislative session, IPHA will provide periodic updates on legislation relating to public health issues. IPHA provides these updates not to advocate particular points of view, positions or pieces of legislation. Rather, as part of IPHA's nonprofit mission, we provide these updates to be a resource of objective, nonpartisan information regarding the Legislature's work in relation to issues of interest to the public health community. We hope that you will find these updates to be helpful resource, and appreciate your comments. Our hope is that IPHA's Blog will become a forum for informed and constructive exchanges on public health related legislative issues during this Session.

The 2010 Idaho State Legislature got underway this week in the newly remodeled Statehouse, beginning Monday with Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter's State of the State address on Monday. Later in the week, members of the Legislature's Interim Task Force on Health Care held several meetings discussing various health-related legislative proposals.

**A. The Governor's State of the State Address**

In his address, Governor Otter outlined five "fundamental principles" that illustrate his approach to the economic challenges facing policy makers this session. First, he advised policymakers that "we must not raise taxes." Second, he stated that "we must continue to maintain some level of cash reserve against the prospect of our economic recovery taking longer and being less robust than we hope" and instructed that "prudence demands that we act with caution." Third, the Governor advised that "we must do whatever we can to protect the educational opportunities and safeguard the potential of the next generation of Idahoans - our children and grandchildren." Fourth, he stated to lawmakers that "we must do whatever we can to protect the health, safety and well-being of our citizens--especially the neediest and most vulnerable among us." Finally, the Governor charged that "we must do whatever we can to avoid any duplication of effort or any waste of the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars." The Governor announced an additional \$40 million in holdbacks for the current year, the elimination of 400 jobs (375 are currently vacant), and proposed spending some of the non-endowed money in the Millenium (Tobacco Settlement) Fund. The text of Governor Otter's complete State

of the State address is available [here](#).

## **B. Legislation Proposed by the Health Care Task Force**

On Wednesday afternoon the 2009 Interim Health Care Task Force convened and discussed several pieces of health legislation that will likely be introduced this Session. The Health Care Task Force, which consists of seven Senators and seven Representatives from both political parties, met a half-dozen times during the interim with stakeholders to develop legislation to address health related issues. Though the Task Force actually voted on these bills, the vote is best interpreted as a non-binding vote in general support of the draft legislation being introduced to the germane committees. It can be seen as a "testing the waters" vote. We can expect the following to be among the health-related bills to be introduced during this Session:

### **1. Health Insurance Carrier Assessment for Child Vaccine Acquisition (DRPAP054) (Sponsor Sen. Dean Cameron (R)).**

This piece of legislation is perhaps the most significant undertaking of the Health Care Task Force and is intended to assure the availability of affordable vaccinations for all children in Idaho. Under federal programs, the federal government pays for vaccinations of uninsured children and the State can purchase vaccinations at significantly discounted rates. The intent of this legislation is to set up an assessment mechanism through which insured children would also be able to receive vaccinations purchased by the State at these discounted rates--thus reducing the overall amounts spent to vaccinate children in Idaho.

This legislation would resolve the current problem of either requiring the families of children with insurance to pay significantly more for vaccinations or requiring the State to pay for these vaccinations without any form of reimbursement from private insurers. This legislation also relieves providers from the burden of having to maintain 2 separate stocks of vaccines in their clinic.

Specifically, the legislation would create a Vaccination Assessment Board that would be create a system through which to assess health insurance carriers and third-party administrators (for self-funded employer plans) amounts which would then be used to purchase vaccines that could be provided to insured children. The proposal would also codify the Vaccine Selection Committee, and provide this Committee with specific statutory authority to select the vaccines to be purchased by the State. Because of immediate

vaccination funding concerns, the legislation would be passed as emergency legislation to go into effect on February 1 upon being signed by the Governor. The proposal also contains a three year sunset clause.

The Task Force unanimously voted in support of moving the legislation forward.

## **2. Health Care Planning (DRPAP032) (Sponsor Rep. John Rusche (D))**

This piece of proposed legislation relates to the Health Quality Planning Commission ("HQPC"), which was created by the Legislature in 2006 to both develop a health data exchange for Idaho and to facilitate health planning at the state-level. As a result of HQPC's efforts, the Idaho Health Data Exchange, Inc. ("IHDE") has been created. (For more information regarding IHDE, please see [www.idahohde.org](http://www.idahohde.org).) This piece of legislation would modify the role of HQPC in relation to IHDE so that HQPC would heretofore simply monitor IHDE's activities.

The legislation would also make the HQPC permanent, which is set to dissolve in July 2010 under current law. Moreover, this proposed legislation would further broaden the types of data the HQPC may consider in conducting health planning.

The Task Force voted unanimously to move this legislation forward.

## **3. Health Quality Planning Commission Study of Strokes (RS19264) (Sponsor Rep. John Rusche (D)).**

This legislation proposes a resolution that would "encourage" the Health Quality Planning Commission to study the prevention and treatment of strokes. Rep. Rusche noted that strokes are significant causes of morbidity and mortality and stroke care is not uniform throughout the state. He further noted that the nursing/assisted living care for individuals who have suffered strokes is a significant drain on Medicaid's budget.

The Health Task Force voted to move this legislation forward

## **4. Idaho Childhood Immunization Policy Commission (DRPAP052) (Sponsor Rep. John Rusche (D))**

This piece of proposed legislation would create the Idaho

Childhood Immunization Policy Commission. The purpose of this Commission would be to research and analyze ways to increase child immunization rates in Idaho. The Commission would be made up of nine members appointed by various stakeholder organizations (i.e., the Department of Health & Welfare, Idaho Association of Public Health Districts, the Idaho Primary Care Association, the Idaho Hospital Association, etc.).

The legislation sets forth that the Commission's duties would include reviewing existing law regarding childhood immunizations and making recommendations to the Department of Health and Welfare for rulemaking on improving Idaho's childhood immunization rates, immunization requirements for attending daycare and school, and the Idaho Immunization Reminder System.

The Health Care Task Force voted to move this legislation forward.

#### **5. C Concurrent Resolution Opposing Federal Health Care Reform (DRPA057) (Sponsor Sen. Dean Cameron (R))**

This proposed legislation is a resolution that would state the Legislature's opposition to the federal health reform proposals currently being considered by Congress and expresses various concerns in relation to this proposed legislation.

The Task Force voted to move this legislation forward with recommendation on a 7 Aye-5 Nay roll call vote. Further reporting on this action by journalist Betsy Russell, with The Spokesman Review, is available [here](#).

#### **6. Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Specialist Licensure (DRPAP056) (Sen. Nicole LeFavour (D))**

This proposed legislation would create a state licensure system for Psycho-Social Rehabilitation (PSR) Specialists working in Idaho. The purpose of this legislation would be to provide an in-state licensure system to assess the necessary qualifications for PSR Specialists and provide ongoing training. The licensure system would be run through the Bureau of Occupational Licensure and would be self-sustaining from the collection of PSR Specialist licensure fees.

The Task Force unanimously voted to move the legislation forward, without recommendation, apparently due to concern

that some stakeholders (including Medicaid) had not yet had a sufficient opportunity to provide input on the legislation.

### **In Sum**

Although there will certainly be a number of other pieces of proposed legislation to be introduced in the coming weeks, the proposals brought forth by members of the Health Care Task Force provide a glimpse of some of the public health-related issues the Legislature will address this year. We appreciate your comments and encourage you to regularly refer to IHPA's Website and Blog during the Session for updates on these and other public health issues.

Furthermore, we encourage you use your voice and become involved legislative process this Session. (Please click [here](#) to go to the Idaho State Legislature's website for information on how bills, agendas and how contact legislators.) Likewise, if you know of legislative proposals of interest to the public health community, please leave a comment on the Blog or email me directly at [andyhyer@gmail.com](mailto:andyhyer@gmail.com).

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