



July 6, 2009

Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage Weekly Update-- State and Federal Health Care Reform

Greetings,

This is the third of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage' weekly updates in a series that will continue ***while the Ohio budget wraps up, and as health care reform moves rapidly at the federal level.***

This edition is shorter because Congress was in recess last week.

Ohio 2nd Interim Budget Likely; Health Services Cuts Devastating

Hearings Moving Forward in Legislature on Slots and Consequences of Cuts; Advocates Continue Pushing for Revenue Increase

The Ohio Senate has passed a second interim budget for the period July 8 through 14, funding state government at the same levels as the first interim budget-- 70% of 09 levels with the same areas exempt from the 30% cuts (Have A Heart Ohio e-mail 7/6/09).

The House Finance Committee has continued its hearings on the consequences of budget cuts, and will continue again July 7th. **The Senate Special Committee on the Video Lottery Terminals** is scheduled to meet on July 7th at 10:00 A.M.

The Governor proposed VLTs to raise \$900,000 in revenues without raising taxes. He still makes \$2.4 billion in devastating cuts to health care, food and other vital services. The Senate is opposing the VLTs without offering either substitute cuts or revenues. The Governor and House are blaming the Senate for the stalemate. Everyone seems to be taking their eye off the devastating impact of the \$2.4 billion in cuts, even with VLT revenues.

Meanwhile, radio ads sponsored by the Campaign to Protect Ohio's Future are now airing -- urging listeners to pressure the Governor, Senate President Bill Harris (R., Ashland), and House Speaker Armond Budish (D., Beachwood) to increase revenues as an alternative to cuts. Per the July 6th Toledo Blade the ads are saying "The state budget plan threatens the survival of children, home care for seniors, and families working hard just to make ends meet. We can get back on track if we all share the sacrifice."

Update on Congressional Action

More Details on Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Bill Unveiled

Leading Democrats on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee unveiled new details of the Committee's health care reform plan, which includes

- an individual mandate with fines over \$1,000/year for those who decline coverage (AP 7/3/09) [subject to exemptions for hardship cases and subsidies dependent on income];
- a public health insurance option (USA Today 7/3/09);
- employer contributions of up to \$750/year/employee if the employer does not offer health coverage (USA Today 7/3/09);
- the potential to cover up to 97% of the uninsured when coupled with the bill that is being considered in the Senate Finance Committee (USA Today 7/3/09);
- a price tag of about \$611 billion over ten years [but this doesn't include the added cost of Medicaid expansion that will appear in the Senate Finance Committee's bill] (WSJ 7/3)

Senator Dodd hopes that the HELP Committee will finish its work this week. (USA Today 7/3/09)

More on Federal Reform

Interesting Factoid

A report in the Washington Post on July 6th stated that the health care industry is spending \$1.4 million/day on lobbying on health care reform. PhRMA doubled its spending to \$7 million in the first quarter. Three out of every four health industry lobbying firms has at least one former government insider on its payroll. Their goal is "to minimize the damage to insurers, hospitals and other major sectors while maximizing the potential of up to 46 million uninsured Americans as new customers."

Thanks to Ron Bridges from AARP who gathers national information together in an easy to read format, and from which much of this national material was drawn.

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