

# the Reporter

Illinois Hospital Association



June 4, 2007

## LEGISLATURE APPROVES SUPPLEMENTAL FOR ASSESSMENT

The Illinois Senate on May 31 gave final legislative approval to **SB241**, a bill that includes a supplemental appropriation of \$1.2 billion for the Hospital Assessment Program. The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.

Legislative action on the bill had been slowed by many unrelated issues. With the enactment of the supplemental appropriation, payments to hospitals that had been due in March and May will be made soon.

## STRONG ADVOCACY WINS CON EXTENSION

Thanks to effective advocacy by IHA and its members and the strong support of key legislators, the Certificate of Need (CON) program will be extended until August 31, 2008. The Governor signed **SB244** into law on May 31.

The Illinois House voted 105-9 to approve the bill on May 28; the Senate approved the bill 59-0 on May 30. The new law also calls for the creation of a task force to study potential reforms of the CON program and make recommendations to the Legislature by March 1, 2008.

The bill's House sponsor, Rep. Lisa Dugan (D-Bradley), and House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago) joined IHA in working hard to move this important issue through the House. IHA is also grateful to the bill's Senate sponsor, Sen. Susan Garrett (D-Lake Forest), who was actively engaged throughout the process, and to Sen. Dale Righter (R-Mattoon), who also was a strong supporter.

## LEGISLATURE HEADS TO OVERTIME

For the second time in four years, the General Assembly has gone beyond its regularly scheduled adjournment date of May 31. Democratic legislative leaders and the Governor were unable to reach agreement on several major issues, including the state budget, health care, education, gambling expansion, mass transit, and utility rates. In 2004, the Legislature's overtime session lasted until July 24.

With the Legislature now in overtime, passing the state budget and any legislation with an immediate effective date will require a three-fifths majority vote. That means some Republican votes will be needed to pass the budget in the House (Democrats hold more than a three-fifths majority in the Senate).

The next few weeks will be a critical time for our advocacy efforts. Members need to keep up their contacts with their legislators on important issues such as making funding for health care a top priority in the state budget, including funding to expand access to health care coverage. They also need to be ready to oppose any harmful proposals that were previously stopped but could be resurrected during the overtime session.

## IHA-BACKED NURSE STAFFING BILL ON ITS WAY TO GOVERNOR

The Patient Acuity Nurse Staffing Act passed the Illinois House on a vote of 116-0 on May 29 and is on its way to the Governor for his signature. **SB867** bases hospitals' staffing plans on the patient acuity model of each hospital and reflects an agreement reached with the Illinois Nurses Association and the policy position adopted by the IHA Board.

Previously, the Senate approved **SB867** on a vote of 55-0. IHA is appreciative of the strong support of the bill's sponsors, Sen. Carol Ronen (D-Chicago) and Rep. Esther Golar (D-Chicago). Member advocacy played a pivotal role in stopping other legislation that would have addressed staffing through mandatory nurse-patient ratios.

### **CMS MEDICAID CUTS BLOCKED, MEDICARE CUTS STILL AT ISSUE**

President Bush has signed the emergency supplemental war spending bill that includes measures strongly supported by IHA. One provision puts a one-year moratorium on CMS rules that would have cut certain Medicaid payments by \$4.8 billion. The supplemental bill also includes emergency funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program, which will help fill the program's shortfall in Illinois.

Meanwhile, a letter was circulated in the House by Reps. Jerry Weller (R-IL) and John Lewis (D-GA) opposing CMS inpatient PPS provisions that would cut Medicare payments to hospitals by 2.4% in the next two years and would eliminate the capital update for urban hospitals and additional payments for hospitals in large urban areas. These provisions would mean a decrease of 0.2% to Illinois hospitals from FY2007 to FY2008. See our web site ([click here](#)) for a copy of the letter and the list of Illinois Representatives who signed it.

### **COMMUNITY MRSA ON THE RISE**

A report by Chicago medical researchers published recently in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that the incidence of community-acquired MRSA infections in Cook County's public hospitals and clinics has risen sharply in recent years, from 24 cases per 100,000 people in 2000 to 164 cases per 100,000 in 2005.

In the communities served by county health care facilities, those in crowded prisons and public

housing complexes and exposed to intravenous drug use and poor hygiene had high increases for MRSA infections. However, Susan Gerber, MD, of the Chicago Department of Public Health said it would be a mistake to assume the infection isn't occurring in affluent neighborhoods. The study looked only at people using the public hospital system and not the entire Chicago area.

Illinois hospitals have responded to the rise in MRSA by screening patients and taking precautions to protect both those infected and other patients. Over 160 Illinois hospitals have signed on to the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 5 Million Lives Campaign, which calls for the reduction and eradication of hospital-acquired MRSA.

### **BRIEFLY NOTED**

- ✓ **SB6**, a bill that requires HFS to reimburse psychiatrists for providing mental health services via telemedicine, was given final legislative approval by the Illinois Senate on May 24 on a vote of 53-0. The measure, backed by IHA, is aimed at expanding access to psychiatric care in medically underserved and rural areas.
- ✓ **SB472**, a bill backed by trial lawyers concerning the copying of medical records, was given final legislative approval by the Illinois Senate last week (May 31). The bill would allow hospitals to charge persons seeking medical records in an electronic format only \$0.75 per disc.
- ✓ American hospitals discard billions of dollars worth of medical equipment and supplies that could be used to save lives in other parts of the world. The Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach program of the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis collects medical equipment and supplies and distributes them in areas with the greatest need. To learn more or become a partnering health organization, visit [www.mission-outreach.org](http://www.mission-outreach.org).