

THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

[COMMITTEE OKAYS ASSESSMENT SUPPLEMENTAL JCAR DELAYS ACTION ON FAMILYCARE EXPANSION IHA FIGHTS UNION BILL ON USE OF STATE FUNDS BILLS WOULD TEMPORARILY INCREASE FMAP NEW YORK PROBES HEALTH INSURANCE INDUSTRY PREVENTING MRSA IN RURAL COMMUNITIES BRIEFLY NOTED](#)

COMMITTEE OKAYS ASSESSMENT SUPPLEMENTAL

The Illinois Senate Appropriations I Committee unanimously approved **SB1863**, a supplemental appropriation for the Hospital Assessment Program, after holding a brief hearing on Feb. 13. The full Senate is expected to vote on the bill next week.

IHA submitted written testimony from the three chairmen officers of the IHA Board of Trustees, current chair Jim Skogsbergh, President and CEO, **Advocate Health Care**, Oak Brook; chair-elect Harry Wolin, CEO, **Mason District Hospital**, Havana; and immediate past chair Gary Barnett, President and CEO, **Sarah Bush Lincoln Health System**, Mattoon.

They noted that the state had already missed making two quarterly payments to hospitals, with the next quarterly payment due next month. "The long delay in payments financed by the assessment program is now jeopardizing the ability of all hospitals across the state to continue providing essential, quality care to the most vulnerable populations - children, families, the disabled, and the elderly," the chairmen said. "Some hospitals have been forced to take out loans in order to meet payroll or forced to delay important facility infrastructure

THIS WEEK'S MAIL

[Making the Business Case for Quality Improvement](#)
TO: CEOs; CFOs

[Quality Improvement Educational Events - Time Sensitive Responses Needed](#)
TO: CEOs

[This Week's Mail Archives](#)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Feb. 21: [Infusion Confusion: What's Your Solution? Updates for 2008 OPPS](#)
(Webinar program)

Feb. 27: [Prevention Strategies for MRSA in Rural Communities](#)

[Education Calendar](#)

[Sponsorship Opportunities](#)

and service improvement projects, and many hospitals are sustained by only a few days of cash flow." The testimony can be seen on our web site.

Members can send emails and letters to their Senators urging them to pass **SB1863** from our web site.

Meanwhile, the Senate Appropriations II Committee held the third in a series of hearings Feb. 13 on the development of a new assessment program. IHA Sr. Vice President Howard Peters told the committee that IHA and other key parties have been meeting with the Dept. of Healthcare and Family Services, and that IHA is willing to work on parallel tracks toward both an extension of the current assessment program and the development of a new statewide plan. Also testifying was Bob Urbance, director of reimbursements for **Memorial Health System**, Springfield, who talked about the importance and benefits of the statewide assessment program.

[\(top of page\)](#)

JCAR DELAYS ACTION ON FAMILYCARE EXPANSION

The Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) this week postponed taking action on rules proposed by the Governor to expand the FamilyCare Program to cover caretaker relatives (of children) with incomes up to 400% of the federal poverty level. While not objecting to the proposed rules, JCAR recessed its meeting until Feb. 26.

Under the proposed rules, the state would also continue providing coverage for caretakers of children receiving medical assistance who also received medical assistance under a federal waiver to the State Children's Health Insurance Program that expired last Sept. Without this rule, 15,000-20,000 caretakers in Illinois would lose coverage. IHA supports the proposed rules as part of its long-time goal to increase access to health care coverage for all Illinoisans.

[\(top of page\)](#)

IHA FIGHTS UNION BILL ON USE OF STATE FUNDS

IHA urges members to keep contacting the House Labor Committee to oppose a bill backed by unions that would prohibit hospitals from using state funds they have received to influence the decisions of employees regarding union representation. Under **HB757**, the proposed ban would apply to payments for services already provided, such as Medicaid. As a result, hospitals would be forced to avoid having discussions with their employees and to track the source of particular revenues

because they have cared for Medicaid patients. The Labor Committee did not take any action on the bill this week. Members can send emails or letters to their representatives opposing **HB757** from our web site by. _____

[\(top of page\)](#)

BILLS WOULD TEMPORARILY INCREASE FMAP

Legislation was introduced in Congress to increase the Medicaid federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) to states by 2.95% from Apr. 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009. **HR5268**, led by Reps. John Dingell (D-MI) and Frank Pallone (D-NJ), and **S2620**, led by Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), would assist Illinois and other state Medicaid programs facing financial difficulties. Illinois currently receives the lowest FMAP rate of 50%.

[\(top of page\)](#)

NEW YORK PROBES HEALTH INSURANCE INDUSTRY

New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo announced he is investigating the nation's largest health insurance companies for allegedly scheming to "defraud consumers by manipulating reimbursement rates" for out-of-network medical expenses. Cuomo has issued 16 subpoenas to the nation's largest health insurance companies and plans to file suit against Ingenix - a company widely used by the insurance industry to calculate reasonable and customary rates - its parent UnitedHealth Group, and three additional subsidiaries.

Cuomo says he is looking into whether health insurance companies have forced patients to pay more than they should have when using doctors and hospitals outside their insurers' networks.

[\(top of page\)](#)

PREVENTING MRSA IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

IHA's Small and Rural Hospitals Constituency Section will hold a multi-site videoconference Feb. 27 to provide members with information on preventing MRSA in hospitals. Speakers will include Ari Robicsek, MD, epidemiologist, **Evanston Hospital**; William Scharf, MD, general surgeon, **OSF HealthCare**; and, Craig Conover, MD, medical director, IDPH Office of Health Protection.

An IDPH report recently released indicates that MRSA

infections in Illinois hospitals have increased 56.7% during the past five years, "in all areas of Illinois, regardless of hospital category, based on population density, bed size, and teaching status." The report can be seen by [clicking here](#).

Additional program information is available on our web site. Or contact Abby Radcliffe at 217-541-1178.

[\(top of page\)](#)

BRIEFLY NOTED

✓ The Illinois Dept. of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) posted information on its web site on Feb. 7 regarding Medicaid recipient eligibility that has caused some confusion for providers. The HFS message seen when checking eligibility has changed, but the rules for eligibility have not. The message would include a reference to "A HFS Social Services" and "B HFS Social Services." To find out more about current HFS system issues, [click here](#).

✓ The U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS) published its long-awaited proposed rule creating a voluntary national patient safety reporting program which will allow hospitals and other organizations to become Patient Safety Organizations (PSOs). PSOs would confidentially gather data to help identify the underlying causes of errors and create protocols for patient safety. Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted through Apr.14. The proposed rule is on IHA's web site.

✓ The February issue of *Chicago Hospital News* features a cover article, "Illinois Hospital Association Faces Busy Agenda in 2008," an interview with IHA Board of Trustees chair Jim Skogsbergh, President and CEO, **Advocate Health Care**, Oak Brook.

[\(top of page\)](#)