

the Reporter

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THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

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IHA TESTIFIES AT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET HEARING

On March 10, IHA Senior Vice President Howard Peters testified before the state Senate Committee on Deficit Reduction about the need to protect the health care delivery system, including Medicaid, in the state budget. He also urged lawmakers to invest in the health care system by including hospitals' needs in a state capital program.

Illinois hospitals serve as a strong partner with state government, and Medicaid is an important health care safety net for newly unemployed Illinoisans and other vulnerable populations, while providing a substantial stimulus to the state economy, he pointed out.

Peters told committee members that Medicaid has a tremendous multiplier impact on the state's economy - a greater impact than state spending on other programs - because it pulls in a large infusion of

THIS WEEK'S MAIL

[Promoting National Healthcare Decisions Day at Your Facility](#)

TO: PR Directors; CEOs; Government Relations Personnel

[IHA Small and Rural Quality Series - *Quality Counts: Implementing Quality Improvement Strategies*](#)

[IHA Management Institute 101](#)

Save the Date

May 13: [The Joint Commission - Hot Topics and 2009 Standards Emphasis](#)

May 14: [Transitions - Understanding the 2009 EC, EM and LS Chapters](#)

[This Week's Mail Archive](#)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 24: [Working with Hospital Volunteers - Marketing Your Volunteer Program](#)

April 2: [IHA Management Institute 101 - Performance](#)

new federal dollars into the economy from outside the state. For every \$1 that Illinois spends on Medicaid, the state receives \$1.50 in enhanced federal Medicaid matching funds under the economic stimulus law.

Peters emphasized that health care, because it is a primary responsibility of state government, should be supported and funded by broad-based, reliable revenue sources. He also recommended that the state maximize federal funding for state health programs, by taking such steps as addressing the Medicaid backlog to meet federal prompt pay requirements so that the state will be able to draw down nearly \$3 billion in enhanced federal matching funds.

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STATE LEGISLATURE AT CRITICAL JUNCTURE

IHA and its members this week culminated several weeks of engaging in intense discussions, advocacy work, and testimony to protect the hospital community on a wide range of issues as the General Assembly reached a key point in the spring session. With this week's deadlines passing for committees to report out bills, we are well positioned on critical health care and hospital issues heading into the final months of the session.

IHA greatly appreciates the support of members who provided key leaders, physicians, nurses and others to testify in committees and the outstanding member response to IHA's many advocacy alerts.

Just a few weeks ago, the General Assembly overwhelmingly approved legislation (**HB1027**) authorizing the state to borrow \$510 million from designated state funds to enable the state to make more than \$1 billion in payments to hospitals last week under the new Hospital Assessment Program.

This week, several committees decided to strip out the original language of bills, keeping them alive as "shell" bills for further discussion. Some bills were sent to subcommittees because of their fiscal impact on the state budget - pending work on the state budget - while other bills were sent to subcommittees for further study. Among bills of concern to the hospital community, here is a summary of IHA's positions and final committee actions:

--**HB485/SB224** - Establishing mandatory nurse staffing ratios - IHA opposes - not called by committee in the House; sent to subcommittee in the Senate;

--**HB976/SB1407** - Allowing postsurgical recovery centers to become hospitals - IHA opposes - House bill stripped of original language; Senate bill held in committee;

[Management](#)

[April 3: IHA Small and Rural Quality Series - Session 1](#)

[Education Programs](#)

[COMPdata Programs](#)

[Sponsorship Opportunities](#)

--**HB3651** - Reforming and extending CON - IHA supports - sent to subcommittee; in addition, a Senate bill is being amended to include CON language supported by IHA; in the coming week, IHA will be asking members to step up their advocacy in support of these bills;
--**SB1820** - Requiring hospitals to include costs of items and services on hospital bills - IHA opposes - sent to subcommittee;
--**SB1893** - Imposing mandatory Medicaid managed care in omnibus health care reform bill - IHA opposes - bill stripped of original language and voted out of committee as shell bill; and
--**SB2287** - Prohibiting unilateral insurance amendments - IHA supports - voted out of committee and sent to the Senate floor.

Next week, the focus in the General Assembly will be on Gov. Quinn when he gives his budget address on March 18 to present his proposals on state spending and revenues.

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MEMBERS URGED TO TESTIFY ON CAPITAL BUDGET

The Illinois House of Representatives has scheduled a one-month series of 14 bipartisan hearings regarding a capital budget to meet the state's infrastructure needs. Members are encouraged to attend local hearings, urge legislators to include hospitals in the capital budget and provide specific examples of their hospital's capital needs. IHA will be distributing suggested talking points to members. The initial hearings include:

March 16: Herrin Civic Center;
March 20: Copley Theater, Aurora;
March 23: White Oak Elementary School, Morris; and
March 23: Champaign Public Library.

Hearings continue through Apr. 16. [Click here](#) for the full schedule. IHA is available to work with you as needed. If you are interested in testifying, please contact [Kathleen Dunn](#) at 217-541-1153, [Nichole Magalis](#) at 217-541-1162 or [Danny Chun](#) at 630-276-5558.

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ASSESSMENT PAYMENTS TO STATE DUE MARCH 13

Hospitals' assessment payments to the state are now due, with the state having made the initial payments of more than \$1 billion to hospitals last week under the new Hospital Assessment Program. The deadline for hospital payments to the state for the first eight months of the program (retroactive to last July) is March 13; payment for the month of March 2009 is due by March 19.

The hospital assessment program provides for monthly payments to hospitals, so hospitals must meet the deadlines for payments to the state to ensure the state has sufficient funds to keep the program going on an orderly, self-sustaining payment schedule.

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EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT INTRODUCED

On March 10, the Employee Free Choice Act (**H.R. 1409**), also known as the "card check" bill, was introduced in the U.S. House and Senate by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA). IHA strongly opposes this legislation.

Despite widespread support (the House bill has 222 cosponsors, including all Democratic members of the Illinois delegation), legislators need to hear how the bill would impact your hospital's ability to deliver quality, cost-effective care by denying employees the right to a secret ballot and allowing an outside party to impose the terms of a contract between a hospital and its workers.

At the same time, we can urge legislators to cosponsor and support "The Secret Ballot Protection Act," **H.R. 1176/S. 478**. Introduced by Rep. John Kline (R-MN) and Sen. Jim DeMint (R-SC), this legislation would ensure employees' right to a secret-ballot election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board.

To contact your U.S. Representative and Senators, [click here](#).

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NATIONAL HEALTH CARE REFORM ON THE MOVE

The chairs of three U.S. House committees on health sent a letter to President Obama on March 11 saying they will pass health care reform legislation before the August recess, pledging to work closely with the Senate and the White House.

Following last week's White House health care summit, regional forums in California, Iowa, Michigan, North Carolina and Vermont will be held in March and early April.

Meanwhile, SEIU and ASFCME have withdrawn from the 20-member Healthcare Reform Dialogue, led by AHA. The coalition plans to issue recommendations this month on how to decrease health costs and help achieve universal coverage.

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ILLINOIS SCORES "D" ON MENTAL HEALTH REPORT

Illinois is one of 14 states that improved their grades in the National Alliance on Mental Illness' second "[Grading the States](#)" report, which assesses the nation's public mental health care system for adults. Illinois' grade went from F to D. The national average is D. Hospitals were not included in this evaluation.

The report says [Illinois](#) leads the nation in the numbers of people with serious mental illnesses warehoused in nursing homes, and says that many Illinoisans with mental illness don't have access to services because of state budget cuts and "agonizingly slow progress in converting the state's system from paying service providers from a grants-based model to a fee-for-service model."

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NATIONAL HEALTH CARE DECISIONS DAY IS APRIL 16

We encourage all member hospitals to join IHA in promoting the second annual [National Healthcare Decisions Day](#) on April 16. With a focus on education, this event helps increase the number of people who understand the importance of end-of-life planning, talking with their loved ones and completing an advance directive. Community education on advance directives is a Medicare requirement. For a detailed [IHA memo](#), click here. Again this year, IHA will recognize member hospitals that participate.

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FOUNDATION COMMENDS ILLINOIS HOSPITALS

In August 2007, Illinois became the first state to pass a law requiring every hospital, fire station, police station and emergency medical facility to post a uniform exterior sign showing that a newborn infant may be relinquished at that location. "Now Illinois is the first state in the country to have 100% of its hospitals in compliance with the signs mandate," announced Penny Green, President of the Save Abandoned Babies Foundation. "This will help clarify to the public what locations are Safe Havens in Illinois, and help save the lives of more babies." Since the 2001 law went into effect, 49 babies in Illinois have been legally relinquished. IHA's work in communicating the information was also saluted. [Click here](#) to see the full press release.

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BRIEFLY NOTED

- Cover the Uninsured Week will be held March 22-28. To see events in Illinois or to publicize your hospital's information, [click here](#). Resources are available on the Cover the Uninsured Week [web site](#).
- IHA encourages hospital CEOs to complete AHA's rapid response online economic impact survey by March 25. Contact AHA Member Relations at 800-424-4301 for user names and passwords.
- The U.S. House passed **H.R. 1127**, which includes an extension of the Conrad state 30 J-1 visa waiver program until Sept. 30. State health agencies can hire up to 30 foreign physicians each year in rural and inner-city underserved areas. The bill now goes to the Senate.
- AHA's annual meeting is Apr. 26-29. House Minority Whip Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA) has been added to the program. Make reservations at IHA's designated hotel, the Fairfax at Embassy Row, by [clicking here](#). For details on IHA events, [click here](#) or contact [Barb Filliung](#) at 630-276-5482.

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STUDIES AND SURVEYS IN THE NEWS

- A new [report](#) from AHA and the Colorado Hospital Association says the average total margin for hospitals in 28 states fell to negative 7.8% in the last quarter of 2008 from positive 4.6% in the last quarter of 2007. Half of the hospitals have negative margins. "The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Health Services for Patients and Communities" also showed that patient discharges fell 0.5%, while the uncompensated care costs rose 6.6% and the cost of capital rose 12%.

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