

American Academy of Pediatrics

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BLASTFAX!

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2010 State Legislative Wrap-Up

Last Thursday night the Georgia General Assembly adjourned its 2010 session, the longest the session has gone in recent history. Generally speaking, it was a good session for the Chapter, as the state struggled with a large deficit and cuts to Medicaid were a distinct possibility early in the session. However, thanks to our lobbying efforts those were avoided this year. Following is a brief summary of the issues we followed and their outcome.

2011 State Budget (*begins July 1, 2010*)

- No cuts in Medicaid reimbursement for physicians. (Cuts ranging from 2% to 13% had been proposed during the session.)
- Hospitals now be taxed at 1.45% of net revenue for 3 years in return for rate increases of 11%. However, whether a hospital is a net winner or a net loser, is a function of the amount of Medicaid volume they see.
- Planning for Healthy Babies waiver included to extend Medicaid benefits to women following pregnancy

Bills:

Autism: HB 426, Would have required expanded insurance coverage for autism, including coverage for ABA. Died in committee due to opposition from health plans.

Bullying, SB 250: Would require schools to develop policies prohibiting, expands definition of bullying, educate parents, etc. Passed.

Cell phone use & texting by teens: Prohibits use of cell phone and texting by teen drivers and texting while driving by all drivers. Passed. (HB 23 and SB 360).

Flu mist vaccine: HB 736, Adds nasal flu vaccine to the injectable forms of flu vaccine which pharmacists may give to those between ages of 13 and 49. Passed.

Health Insurance, inter-state policies: HB 1184/SB 407: would have permitted sale of inter-state insurance policies, however would exempt them from observing Georgia's mandated benefit laws, including coverage for well-child visits. Died on the last day when Senate failed (intentionally) to take it up. We opposed these bills.

Heart Screenings for young athletes, HR 1889, Urges Georgia High School Association to notify parents and students about the availability of "heart screenings" and encourages high school athletes to have the procedure done. Did not move. (GHSA has an initiative underway in this area.)

Medicaid CMO Oversight Committee, SB 443: would create a Medicaid CMO Legislative Oversight committee to review consumer & provider complaints, etc. Failed.

Medicaid Dental Crave-out, HB 1407, Would take dental services out of the Medicaid CMO's and return them to Fee-for-Service Medicaid program. Passed, but a veto by the Governor is expected.

Prompt Pay, SB 62, Requires Third Party Administrators of self-funded plans (aka ERISA plans) to abide by the state's prompt pay law. Passed.

Seat belt use, pick-up trucks, SB 458, Requires use of seat belts in pick-up trucks by adults. (Currently those under 18 years old must use seat belts.) Passed.

Therapy services for children in Medicaid CMO's: Would make certain improvements in providing these services in Medicaid CMOs. Died in committee

Tobacco tax increase: HB 39, Would have increased tax on cigarettes from .37 to \$1.37 a pack & raised about \$400M in annual near-term revenue. Died in committee.

Trauma Care: Would add a \$10 fee to motor vehicle registrations to fund a compressive statewide trauma care system, if passed by voters. Passed.

For a complete text of any these bills you can visit the Georgia General Assembly website: www.legis.state.ga.us. For more information on these or other bills, contact Rick Ward, at the Chapter office, at rward@gaaap.org. Thanks to the members of the Legislative Committee for their efforts during the session and to all our members who contacted their legislators about our issues. Your support and participation in the legislative process is vitally important to our advocacy.

Melinda Willingham, MD

Chair, Committee on Legislative Affairs