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Georgia AAP Legislative Alert...

Legislative Session Reaches 30th Day; Medicaid Rates, Medical Cannabis, Autism, & Fireworks Bills Still TBD

The Georgia Legislature completed its 30th Day of its 40-day session last Friday. Only 10 days remain until they adjourn on April 2 at midnight. Here's an update on major bills we're following.

- 1. FY 2016 Budget: Increase reimbursement for physician practices in Medicaid program to Medicare levels.** The Senate Appropriations Committee will report its budget recommendations on Wednesday morning. The House budget writers added \$1.5M for an increase in primary care rates. While this amount is wholly insufficient to achieve Medicare, it is something the Senate can add to. Even if you have already done so **contact your state representative or state senator now** and ask them for a status update and urge them to add funds to the Dept. of Community Health to bring Medicaid payment rates for physician practices to Medicare levels. (We have Talking Points and a Sample Email Letter on the website at www.gaaap.org. Under the Legislative Page.).
- 2. HB 1: Medical cannabis,** would de-criminalize possession for treatment of 9 specified illnesses. Passed House. Another bill, SB 185 has passed the Senate and would restrict its use to those under 18 years old who have intractable epilepsy. Monitoring.
- 3. HB 110: Would permit all fireworks,** like Ala., Tenn. & SC. Passed House last week, 119-49. Now in Senate Comm. Contact your State Senator and ask them to vote "No" on HB 110.
- 4. HB 504: Allows pharmacists right to give immunizations** to those 18 & over, for pneumococcal, meningitis disease, and shingles: and would require entering college students to show proof of meningococcal immunization within 5 prior years. Passed House. Monitoring.
- 5. SB 1: Would require insurance plans to cover autism services.** Passed Senate. In House Insurance Committee. Support.
- 6. HB 436: Would require physicians to offer HIV/AIDS testing to pregnant women** in their 3rd trimester. Passed House. In Senate committee. Support.
- 7. SB 115: Would permit PA's to write Rx prescription for Schedule II drug hydrocodone.** (Pediatrics was removed from the bill.) Failed to "cross-over" so technically "dead", but might be added to other bills that are still alive. Monitoring.

For a **complete list of bills we're following** visit the www.gaaap.org and click on Advocacy/Legislative tab. More information? Contact the Georgia AAP office at 404-881-5091 or email: jrice@gaaap.org, Attn: Rick Ward. Thank you. (And Happy St. Patrick's Day).

Melinda Willingham, MD, Chair
Legislative Committee

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