

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Healthcare Legislation Summary/Update

Spring Meeting – April 25-27, 2018

The N.C. General Assembly is about to begin its short session, Wednesday May 16, 2018 at noon. North Carolina operates under a part-time legislature system, meaning legislators typically have another job when the General Assembly is not meeting. Even years tend to be shorter sessions. The April and May calendars for the General Assembly are available online at this time. Some of the committees are already meeting to discuss topics ranging from disaster relief to judicial reform.

Typically during the short session, the budget is the most important legislation to be passed. Once the budget is passed, it is typically in effect for two years. These bills are important to accurately portray the correct amount of government spending.

Some reporters are saying there is a chance the General Assembly would propose potential constitutional amendments to go on the ballot. Some of these issues include introducing voter ID laws as well as lowering the state income tax. Another critical issue for the legislature will be November's midterm elections. Members of the General Assembly will be keeping in mind that their actions could impact whether they get reelected. Primaries for the midterm elections will be May 8. It is rumored there is a possibility the Democrats could gain a substantial amount of seats in the midterm elections. At the very least, they hope to eliminate the supermajority that the Republicans currently have. Some feel if Democrats are able to pick up enough seats, they would be able to sustain Gov. Cooper's veto ability, which would help restore some of his power.

It has also been reported that Legislators will be looking for solutions to GenX, a contaminant that has been found in the Cape Fear River and is a major source of drinking water for those in southeast North Carolina. GenX is connected to various manufacturing processes and has been previously unregulated. The long term effects of GenX on human health are currently unknown.

Bills worth watching:

Health Care Services Billing Transparency: This bill calls for a benchmark fee for any service provided to a patient by an out-of-network provider if an in-network provider is available to meet the patient's needs without unreasonable delay. This proposal would hinder the ability of any doctor to negotiate a fair contract with a health insurance company. The bill states an out-of-network provider's total payment for care or for emergency services is reasonable if it is equal to the benchmark amount. An out-of-network provider would be required to send a bill to the insured individual who is responsible for paying in-network cost sharing, but the patient would have no legal obligation to pay the remaining balance when the benchmark applies. This bill further states that no provider would be able to bill insured individuals for services at a greater rate than the benchmark amount nor would the insurer be required to make any direct payment to the provider.

Optometrists propose house bill to perform surgical procedures: The North Carolina Medical Society opposes this bill because optometrists do not have the requisite training necessary to perform surgery.

Nurses seek legislation to expand their scope of practice: Modernize Nursing Practice Act is a broad ranging and dramatic scope of practice bill. This bill would allow Nurse Practitioners (NP), Certified Nurse Specialists (CNS), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA) and Certified Nurse Midwives (CNM) to practice for the first time in NC without the required supervision of a physician.

Fortunately this year we were able to partner with Mike Vicario, NCHA VP of Regulatory Affairs, who will provide an overview of Bills and Legislative issues the NC Health Care Association supports federally and in state during the Friday morning session. We hope you all plan to attend.

Respectfully submitted by Gayle Snyder, Legislative Committee Chairperson

Committee Members:

Erin Young, Megan Stanley, Dawn Ciokan, Allan Tarleton, Jason Newton, Carolyn Barnette, Shep Tapasak, Ryan Shuirman, Tami Phillips, Carlye Hendershot, John Holton, Michael Rothrock, Anita Baldwin, Kristin White, and Larry Jones