



HMHB Legislative Update March 3, 2008

Legislators have completed 26 of 40 legislative days. The Legislature is not in session today and will reconvene on Tuesday, March 4th. Although the calendar has not been set beyond March 4th, which is the 27th day, it is expected that the Legislature will be in session for two to three days this week.

Crossover day, the 30th legislative day and the last day to pass legislation in the originating chamber, is fast approaching. The pressure on legislators to move their bills out of committee and to the floor for a vote is increasing daily.

The Amended FY 2008 budget remains in conference committee and House and Senate negotiators appear to have reached an impasse, primarily over education funding. In the meantime, work on the FY 2009 budget is at a standstill until disagreements over the FY 2008 budget are resolved.

Update on HMHB Legislative Agenda

Oppose legislation that threatens health insurance benefits such as mammograms, pap smears, and childhood immunizations. Many bills touting high deductible health plans and health savings accounts have been introduced. The following two bills are moving.

- **SB 383 (Sen. Judson Hill, 32nd)** encourages high deductible health plans and allows consumer rebates for consumers participating in wellness programs only under high deductible health plans. Shifts responsibility for designing health benefits under this type of health insurance plan out of public view and inside the Department of Insurance. Advocates are concerned with what the Department of Insurance would do on this issue with little or no oversight. We do not believe such legislation is in the best interests of consumers. **Passed the Senate and is in House Insurance.**
- **HB 1087 (Rep. Mickey Channell, 116th)** authorizes the Insurance Commissioner to establish flexible guidelines for health savings account eligible high deductible plan designs. Assigned to House Insurance. Hearing on 3/3. Advocates are concerned that as written, HB 1087 would allow health insurance policies that do not include coverage for items such as mammograms, pap smears, after childbirth stays, etc. **While Rep. Channell states that it is not his intention to pass legislation that threatens these health insurance benefits, he is reluctant to allow an amendment that would clarify that these policies must include coverage for currently mandated services.**

ACTION NEEDED: Please contact members of the House Insurance Committee. Ask them not to support legislation that threatens mandated health insurance benefits. Ask that any legislation under consideration by the Committee be amended to clarify that these protections remain in place.

(Committee list with links to contact info:

http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2007_08/house/Committees/insurance/gahins.htm)

For more information on high deductible health plans (HDHPs) and health savings accounts (HSAs) review the following paper written by the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute: <http://www.gbpi.org/pubs/healthcare/20080225.pdf>

OTHER LEGISLATION

HB 1043 (Rep. Sharon Cooper, 41st) redefines lead poisoning as blood level concentration of 15 micrograms per deciliters as determined by blood tests. Current legal definition is 20 micrograms. **Passed the House 2/26 and is assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities.**

This update was prepared for HMHB by Mary Frances Williams. If you have questions, email her at mfwilliams@speakeasy.net