

Minnesota Legislature

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Capitol Update

MINNESOTA AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION

Brevity is the
Soul of Wit...

This week's UPDATE will be (mercifully) short. At least that is my intention as I begin this report.

By the end of the upcoming, we may have the specifics on the Republican majority's budget proposal. House and Senate committee chairs have been meeting on an ongoing basis to get the numbers to balance. Some of the rumors regarding cuts to programs, including EMS, are rampant. However, they are just rumors at this point in time.

This past week, the Republicans announced the 'targets'. These are the total dollar amounts that each policy/finance area must

meet. Both houses agreed that the target for reductions in health and human services will be \$1.6 billion. Ouch.

The Week in Review

Last Monday, there was another meeting of healthcare providers potentially affected by changes or outright repeal of the No Fault Law. Nothing new to report in this area. We are still waiting to see what will be coming forward.

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We had another meeting to discuss how to handle the issue of pursuing legislation that would mandate direct pay to ambulance services. This legislation would apply only to Blue Cross/Blue Shield because they

are the only health plan that does not pay providers directly unless the ambulance service is a participating provider. There will be one last meeting with the senior staff at BC/BS on Wednesday to seek a non-legislative resolution.

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The Community Paramedic bill was heard in the House Health & Human Services Finance Committee last Tuesday. An amendment was adopted, which was considered 'friendly' by our author, Rep. Tara Mack. Basically, the amendment simply clarified the intent of the bill. We asked our author to reject an additional amendment that would have put the Community Health Worker's association on the

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body that will review reimbursement and payable services. It was superfluous because Public Health has a spot on the group and Community Health Workers fall under Public Health.

The bill passed, with only one “no” vote, and was sent to the floor. We are trying to get the bill scheduled for a full floor vote as soon as possible. The Senate version will be considered on the floor on Monday.

I would like to thank Rep. Erin Murphy for her help in fashioning language to address a number of areas. Previously, Rep. Murphy was a “no” vote. She now supports the legislation and offered supportive remarks as to why this bill is important.

Thanks also to Dave Renner who lobbies for the American Academy of Family Physicians. They formally endorsed the CP bill last week.

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Thanks to Jim Abeler, Chair of the House H&HS Finance Committee for allowing MN ACEP to make a presentation before his committee on the importance of the Statewide Trauma System and the brittle nature of the EMS delivery system. Incoming MN ACEP President, Dr. Bill Heegaard,

was able to testify on very short notice – and hit a home run. His excellent testimony was followed by a number of questions about trauma, EMS and the importance of maintaining the system.

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On Thursday, we met with Senator Sean Nienow regarding his legislation to eliminate the Statewide Trauma System. We had a very good give-and-take. The senator believes that this is another layer of unnecessary bureaucracy within the state. We pointed out that participation in the Trauma System is voluntary. He responded that there is pressure on non-participants that makes it feel as if is mandatory. It was a good discussion. There is no House companion as of this writing.

Long Hot Summer

North Memorial Medical Center held their annual conference over the past weekend. As usual, it was an impressive offering of courses and speakers. It is my understanding that there were over 350 attendees.

Minnesota Ambulance Association

On Friday morning, at the LHS conference, the MAA held their regularly scheduled board

meeting. Two legislative issues were discussed. First, there was considerable discussion about MN STAR, the data collection program for ambulance services in Minnesota. Legislative Chair, Buck McAlpin, President Ron Robinson and I continue to hear concerns over the system as well as the potential move to expand the data base. The issue was not whether data is important or not. The MAA pushed for accurate data collection well before MN STAR was initiated. But the concerns over accuracy and user friendly aspects of the system continue. The full board voted to seek legislation that would put a 2-year moratorium on mandatory compliance with MN STAR. The EMSRB would be required to establish a work group to discuss issues surrounding the program.

A second issue was brought forward dealing with liability for equipment donated by fire departments. This bill has been around for a number of years and tends to discourage equipment donation to needy departments. We will be discussing adding a minor amendment to the bill that would include “EMS-related equipment”. The Fire Chiefs have already been talked to and they are OK with this addition to their bill. House author, Rep. Tara Mack has also agreed to the amendment. The

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initiative will be heard in committee this coming week.

Closing Notes

- ◆ Congratulations to the folks in Cloquet upon receiving the Local Government Innovations Award. The recognition is for “service redesign and improving the lives of citizens and the community.” The formal award presentation will be made on April 13th. Thanks to Chief Jim Langenbrunner for the heads up.
- ◆ It is my understanding that Speaker of the House Kurt Zellars has appointed Rep. Duane Quam as the ex-officio House member on the EMSRB. Rep. Quam is a first-term Republican from Byron, MN. At the legislature, he has shown considerable interest in EMS – particularly concerning rural providers.

- ◆ Last, a very sincere thanks to the folks with the Minnesota EMS Honor Guard. They presented me with one of the numbered tokens that they promote to help finance their efforts. Everyone with the group is truly a volunteer. All the drills are done on their own time. They should make all of us proud. The best way to show your appreciation is to make out a check to support their work. Donations may be sent to Minnesota EMS Honor Guard, PO Box 823, St. Cloud, MN 56302.