



## For The Week Ending February 29, 2008

The Vermont legislature is in recess until the week of March 10 to allow legislators to attend their local Town Meetings and take a brief break. When they return that week, committee schedules will be packed with key bills that must be finished to meet the “crossover deadline,” a self-imposed deadline that requires all bills to be passed by a chamber by March 14 or moved to a money committee to be assured of consideration by the other chamber. Because this is the second year of the biennium, any bill that doesn’t meet this deadline is unlikely to be considered.

Several major health care proposals will be shaped during this week, including a House Health Care Committee bill to enact the key recommendations of the Legislative Committee on Health Care Reform and a significant bill in the Senate Health and Welfare Committee to take mental health parity to another level (S.114). A bill to reform the individual market (S.205) that was approved by the Senate Finance Committee earlier this session may also be considered by the Senate Health and Welfare Committee.

The House Health Care Committee intends to release a first draft of their bill when the committee returns next week. That draft is expected to contain most of the proposals they’ve considered during the first weeks of the session. Those include provisions related to health plans such as:

### **Building Blocks for Health Care Reform**

- Feasibility study of community based payment reform and integration of care
- Assessment of options for merging fragmented risk pools
- Assessment of universal standards for benefits package, payment methods and administrative processes
- Assessment of financing options

### **Expanding Affordable Coverage**

- Fieldstone Health
- Post-divorce coverage (S.62)
- Expand dependent coverage to age 24
- Reduce Catamount waiting period to 6 months (from 12 months)
- Catamount financial hardship exemption to waiting period
- Catamount pre-existing conditions
- Eliminate 75 percent rule

The draft will also contain proposals for healthy lifestyles, supporting health information technology, and “investments” in the health care system and workforce.

The Senate Health and Welfare Committee last week moved closer to adopting mental health and substance abuse legislation designed to require insurers to administer those benefits the same as they do for physical health. The committee is considering S.114 as introduced and a substitute proposal by BISHCA that would significantly enhance its regulatory authority to scrutinize health insurer practices. Insurers are concerned that the bill as introduced would effectively prohibit “carve-outs.” The committee will likely choose between those options when they return the week of March 10.

Also last week, the House approved a bill (H.867) from the Government Operations Committee that would decouple athletic trainers from the supervision of physical therapists and allow athletic trainers to bill insurers. The legislation does not explicitly require insurers to reimburse for those services.

There will be no Legislative Report next week due to the Town Meeting week recess.

If you are interested in this week’s Legislative Committee Meeting schedules, agendas, and a listing of other meetings and activities, please visit the Vermont Legislature’s website at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/schedule/schedule2.cfm> Committee meetings are normally updated daily, and are subject to change without notice. If you plan on attending, you may want to call ahead to verify the agenda.

For more information on legislative proposals, visit the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont website at [www.bcbsvt.com](http://www.bcbsvt.com) or call Leigh Tofferi at (802) 223-6131 or Kathy Parry at (802) 371-3205. If you wish to discontinue receiving these updates or know of anyone else who would like to receive it, please call Kathy Parry or send an e-mail to [parryk@bcbsvt.com](mailto:parryk@bcbsvt.com)