



### **For the Week Ending April 3, 2009**

The Vermont House of Representatives took major steps last week toward the legislature's planned May 8<sup>th</sup> adjournment by passing a trio of proposals: a FY2010 general fund appropriation bill, a transportation bill including a motor fuels tax, and the session's most controversial proposal: same-sex marriage.

The many hours spent by House members considering those proposals meant fewer hours available for committee time. The House Health Care Committee had hoped to finalize its omnibus health care bill last week, but ran short of committee time, delaying a vote on the bill until Tuesday of this week.

However, few changes are expected to the latest version of the bill that now includes:

- Changes to the governance structure of Vermont Information Technology Leaders (VITL), a non-profit established to enact an electronic health record and facilitate improvements in health information technology;
- Modifications to the state's small group continuation of coverage law (VIPER) to allow Vermonters to take advantage of federal changes to COBRA that offer premium subsidies included in the newly enacted economic stimulus legislation;
- Modifications to the state's Catamount Health program for the uninsured including reducing the \$10,000 threshold for qualifying for the high-deductible exemption from the 12-month waiting period, exempting certain individuals who dropped coverage in the non-group market from the preexisting condition exclusion, designating depreciation as an allowable business expense for purposes of income calculation under state assistance programs, and changing the criteria for the health care reform commission's evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of ESI and private administration of Catamount;
- Additional regulation and standards health insurers must conform to when contracting with medical providers;
- Authorization for health care providers to treat without examination the partner of a patient diagnosed with Chlamydia;
- Authorization of a study of ways to implement timely, effective stroke treatment in Vermont; and
- Authorizing the state department of health to establish a purchasing pool for several recommended vaccines.

The committee opted not to include provisions to allow young adults to continue coverage on their parent's health benefit plan creating income-sensitive deductibles within the Catamount Health plan for the uninsured nor to prohibit pre-existing conditions exclusions beyond certain individuals leaving non-group coverage. The committee also decided not to offer HSAs in the Catamount program.

This week, the House Health Care Committee will begin review of a Senate-passed bill (S.129) to contain health care costs by decreasing variability in treatments and the Senate Health and Welfare Committee will continue hearings on a House-passed bill (H.24) to limit out-of-pocket member costs for colorectal cancer screenings.

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 [webmail@bcbsvt.com](mailto:webmail@bcbsvt.com)