



## For the Week Ending February 6, 2009

Declining state revenues, a growing budget deficit, and pending federal economic stimulus legislation continues to dominate discussion in the Vermont legislature as it struggles to develop a spending plan that won't decimate state services. Meanwhile, House and Senate committees focus their efforts on other legislation that won't cost the state money.

The House Health Care Committee completed its work on a bill (H.24) to mandate health insurance coverage for colonoscopy cancer screenings and limit member out-of-pocket cost sharing to a \$25 or less co-payment. The committee voted 10-0-1 in favor of the bill after including language to direct the state agency that oversees health plans and hospital budgets (BISHCA) to analyze the top preventive screenings done in hospital facilities to determine the true costs of those procedures. Employers and insurers had testified that the cost of colonoscopies should be lower if the state wanted to impose a mandate with cost sharing limits.

The Senate Health and Welfare Committee last week heard additional testimony on a proposal (S.37) to require health plans to reimburse auxiliary health providers under Medicare rules. Health plans already pay for auxiliary providers but the intent of the legislation is to allow professionals in training who have not yet been licensed to bill for their services. Health plan witnesses and BISHCA told the committee they had not yet determined the full impact of the proposal and were still gathering information. The committee will revisit the issue at a later date.

This week, the House Health Care Committee will continue its look at the Douglas administration's proposal to modify Catamount Health benefits to save the state money and attract younger members to the program for uninsured Vermonters. The plan would create additional deductibles based on income and add a health savings account option. The committee will also take up H.162, a bill creating a process for health care providers to dispute and collect payment for worker's compensation claims. This bill contains a provision that would require health plans to seek reimbursement from the worker's comp carrier or employer for claims it paid for that were subsequently determined to be work related. It states that the health plan and the employer or worker's comp carrier has no claim against a provider.

### **Other Bills of Interest:**

**H.120** Introduced by Representative Koch of Barre Town and others

This bill proposes to require chain restaurants to post nutritional information for all food sold.

**H.138** Introduced by Representative Maier of Middlebury

This bill proposes that the Vermont Information Technology Leaders, Inc. (VITL) and any of its members or employees shall not be considered health care providers.

**H.140** Introduced by Representative Jewett of Ripton and others

This bill proposes to eliminate the 12-month coverage exclusion for pre-existing conditions under Catamount Health.

**H.162** Introduced by Representatives Maier of Middlebury and Kitzmiller of Montpelier

This bill proposes to create a process for health care providers to submit, dispute, and collect payment, including interest on bills for medical treatment provided to an injured employee eligible for workers' compensation.

**H.165** Introduced by Representative Hube of Londonderry

This bill proposes to require that the sole health insurance plan offered to school district and supervisory union employees mirror that offered to classified state employees.

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)