



### **For the Week Ending March 27, 2009**

Governor Jim Douglas' promise to veto a gay marriage bill moving through the legislature, a bill to require the owners of Vermont Yankee to fully fund a decommissioning plan for the plant when it ends its useful life, and budget and tax issues dominated activity at the Vermont State House last week.

Meanwhile, health care discussions were centered on what provisions to include in an omnibus bill to be voted out of the House Health Care Committee this week. An initial draft of the proposal was distributed mid-week and the committee is considering adding other proposals as well.

Provisions contained in the draft bill include:

- A series of changes to the state's health care information technology initiatives that position the state to be able to accept more federal stimulus money. The bill also would place more control of the initiative within the state executive branch and revise the private non-profit Vermont Information Technology Leaders' (VITL) duties and governance.
- Several changes to the Catamount Health plan for the uninsured to make it more financially sustainable and accessible to more people. The draft bill would: (1) increase deductibles for some subscribers based on income, (2) designate depreciation as an allowable business expense for income calculation for premium subsidies, (3) exempt self-employed individuals who lose their insurance from the 12-month waiting period for eligibility, (4) reduce from \$10,000 for an individual and \$20,000 for a family the threshold for qualifying for the high-deductible exemption from the 12-month waiting period for eligibility, and (5) change the criteria for the upcoming evaluation to determine if Catamount should be administered by private plans or the state.
- A request that a private lobbying organization, AARP, convene a workgroup to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the employer-sponsored insurance assistance program (ESI) for Catamount and VHAP-eligible workers.
- Provisions requested by the Vermont Medical Society and hospitals to create standards for claims processing, provider networks and extend regulatory powers to BISHCA to enforce those standards. Provisions in the draft that health insurers find objectionable are currently in negotiation between VMS and health insurers and some sections of the draft are likely to be modified before the bill is finalized this week.

- A provision to allow young adults to continue their health coverage on a parent's plan until age 24. This provision may be dropped due to the additional cost to the state employees' health plan. Legislators are under instruction not to add to the state budget due to the deficit crisis.
- A provision to enable health care providers to prescribe treatment without examining the partner of a patient diagnosed with Chlamydia; and
- Require a study for recommending ways to implement timely, effective stroke treatment in Vermont.

The committee has scheduled additional testimony of the draft bill this Tuesday and Wednesday and then should finalize the bill by the end of the week.

The Senate Health and Welfare Committee will begin consideration of the House-passed bill (H.24) on colorectal cancer screenings, hear about a Senate bill (S.81) to require insurers to treat oral anticancer medications the same as intravenous or injected medications, and meet with AARP on Wednesday afternoon.

#### **New Bills of Interest:**

##### **S.131** Introduced by Senators Carris and Mullin of Rutland District

This bill proposes to require all health insurance forms and forms for state health programs to contain an advance directive for applicants to complete, and require the insurer to file the advance directory with the registry.

##### **S.133** Introduced by Senator White of Windham District

This bill proposes to eliminate the public oversight commission.

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)