

The LRHA Policy Corner

April 10, 2006

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA:

➤ Here is the 2006 LRHA Legislative Agenda:

*Legislation LRHA is **SUPPORTING** – House/Senate*

HB106

DURAND

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE

HEALTH CARE: Extends the termination date of the Interagency Task Force on the Future of Family Medicine

HB133

MARTINY

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE CIVIL LAW & PROCEDURE

HEALTH CARE/RECORDS: Provides that fees paid for copying medical records includes certification of those records.

HB302

M STRAIN

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE

DENTISTRY/DENTISTS: Provides for retired dentists to practice at community health care clinics for no remuneration

HB453

TOOMY

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE CIVIL LAW & PROCEDURE

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: Provides a limitation of liability and license suspension for health care providers during a state of emergency

HB576

WALSWORTH

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE

VITAL STATISTICS: Establishes a full and complete vital records registry domiciled in Ouachita Parish no later than 2007

HB663

LAMBERT

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE

MENTAL HEALTH: Repeals the moratorium on the licensure of mental health clinics

HB789

DURAND

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE

HEALTH CARE/PROVIDERS: Provides that applicants for licensure as optometrists and medical psychologists be subject to criminal history background checks

HB792

K CARTER

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE INSURANCE

INSURANCE/HEALTH: Provides for a grace period and a lapse notice prior to cancellation for failure to pay premiums or prepaid charges

HB846

DORSEY

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE JUDICIARY

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: Authorizes temporary registration of health care professionals during a declared state of public health emergency

HB896

WALSWORTH

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE

PHYSICIANS: Provides for physician discounts for rendered health care services

SB19

MCPHERSON

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

MEDICAID: Requires Medicaid providers to donate to charitable pharmacies or any entity approved for distribution and charitable pharmacies to accept unused portions of prescription drugs that are within the expiration date and for such prescription drugs to be dispensed, in accordance with the determination of the pharmacist.

SB105

MARIONNEAUX

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: Establishes the Louisiana Clean Indoor Air Act to prohibit smoking in indoor areas. (gov sig)

SB135

HINES

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

MEDICAID: Provides relative to direct reimbursement of healthcare services provided to Medicaid recipients by an advanced practice registered nurse.

SB311

HINES

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

HEALTH CARE: Provides for the needs assessment review for the approval of federally qualified health centers. (gov sig)

SB312

HINES

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

PHARMACISTS: Enacts the Rural Pharmacy Preservation Act.

SB322

HINES

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

HEALTH CARE: Provides relative to a hospital-based mobile rural health clinic.

SB520

SCHEDLER

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

HOSPITALS: Enhances the ability of hospital service districts to compete in the health care industry. (gov sig)

SB555

L JACKSON

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

MEDICAID: Provides for clinical social workers to qualify as Medicaid providers.

SB570

HINES

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

HEALTH CARE: To provide for the protection of rural hospitals and to ensure ethical referral practices by physicians.

*Legislation LRHA is **OPPOSING** – House/Senate*

HB745

RICHMOND

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE JUDICIARY

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: Provides with respect to the evacuation of health care facilities

HB831

M JACKSON

ASSIGNED TO HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE

HEALTH CARE/RECORDS: Creates the Health Care Consumers Right to Know Act

SB197

MCPHERSON

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

HEALTH CARE: Provides for the evacuation of health care facilities in the event of an approaching hurricane.

SB280

FIELDS

ASSIGNED TO SENATE EDUCATION

EDUCATION: Beginning in 2006-07, requires a family income equal to or under the federal poverty level in addition to academic requirements to be eligible for TOPS. (gov sig)

SB481

ADLEY

ASSIGNED TO SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE

HOSPITALS: Requires all licensed hospitals to report on an annual basis all incidents of hospital-acquired infections to the Department of Health and Hospitals.

STATE & LOCAL ACTION:

****Legislative briefs from the State Legislature***

- Bill expanding access to records clears panel
 - State child-support enforcement efforts would get new tools under a bill that cleared a House panel Thursday.
 - The Department of Social Services agency could administratively access cell phone, cable TV and other records as they try to find those who owe child support and pursue claims.
 - The agency would no longer have to get a court order to get access to the utilities data as well as occupational and professional licenses, public assistance and motor vehicle records under House Bill 355.
 - The House Health and Welfare Committee shipped the bill to the House floor for further debate.

- Measure that protects volunteers moves ahead
 - The House approved legislation April 6th that would allow health-care workers to volunteer during a disaster without being liable for death or injury.
 - House Bill 70 by Rep. Sydnie Mae Durand, D-St. Martinville, would expand the state's "Good Samaritan" law, which protects health-care workers who volunteer their help at an emergency scene.
 - Durand said the purpose of the bill is to protect people like the volunteers who came from all over the country and the globe after hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

- HB 70 now moves to the Senate.
- House OKs usage fee for river pilots group
 - The House passed legislation Thursday that would allow a new river pilots group to charge boats \$60 for using the Mississippi and Calcasieu rivers.
 - Rep. Gil Pinac, D-Crowley, said the purpose of House Bill 781 is to pay the expenses of the Pilotage Fee Commission.
 - The fee commission includes four members who represent river pilots, four who represent shippers and three independents.
 - It was created to end an impasse between river pilots and shippers who use the Mississippi and Calcasieu rivers.
- Similar plan exempts United Way workers
 - The United Way's volunteers would be able to help disaster victims without fearing legal action under legislation that cleared the House Thursday.
 - House Bill 884 by Rep. Sydnie Mae Durand, D-St. Martinville, would exempt United Way and the Southern Mutual Help Organization along with their member organizations and volunteers from liability for "any injury, death, loss, civil penalty or damage" that occurs while rendering disaster relief following a state of emergency such as Hurricane Katrina.
 - The only exception would be damage or injury caused by gross negligence or willful and wanton misconduct.
 - HB 884 now moves to the Senate.

****Senate panel advances orange DWI license***

Motorists twice convicted of drunken driving would drive around with an orange license plate identifying them as drunken drivers if a bill forwarded by a Senate committee April 6th becomes law - Senate Bill 47.

- About 25,000 Louisiana drivers are arrested each year for driving while intoxicated and SB47 would apply only to those who are convicted twice of the offense.
 - Louisiana is ranked No. 2 in the nation for alcohol-related fatalities.
- Members of the Senate Transportation committee, which backed the measure unanimously, questioned if the orange license plates with the letters DWI on them would embarrass innocent family members of the drunken driver.
 - The legislation was amended to include only vehicles registered and primarily driven by the defendant.
 - The main concern is to warn other drivers of others who could be dangerous.
- The orange license plate would have to be attached to any car, truck, van or recreational vehicle registered to a person with a multiple DWI conviction and any vehicle that the person "primarily" operates that may not be registered to him.
 - Anyone who didn't follow that requirement would face up to six months in prison and a \$500 fine.

- The plate would be issued like any other license plate, costing \$25 a year, plus handling and other fees to the state's motor vehicle office.
 - The exact design of the plate would be determined by the state's public safety department.
 - The bill now goes to the full Senate for consideration.

ON THE FEDERAL FRONT:

****Unusual '08 Means a Busy '06 for Iowa, New Hampshire***

The large pool of potential 2008 presidential candidates are a varied lot - some are incumbent members of Congress, others are governors, and still others are former well-known officeholders who are thinking about trying to make a comeback at the highest possible level.

- Yet if you are a resident of Iowa and New Hampshire — hosts of the traditional kickoff events for the presidential nominating campaigns — you might well stumble on one of these would-be presidents eating pancakes with your townsfolk.
- Since President Bush was elected in 2004 to a second and final term over Massachusetts Democratic Sen. John Kerry, prospective candidates of both parties have combined for more than 50 visits to New Hampshire and Iowa.
- Media outlets in both states have been alerted to candidate sightings at college campuses, party fundraisers and local legislative dinners - and Iowa and New Hampshire residents can expect April to be the busiest month yet.
 - Iowans are expecting trips by Republicans such as Arizona Sen. John McCain and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich; former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, the 2004 Democratic vice presidential nominee, also will be in the state.
 - New Hampshire activists are planning for visits by Gingrich, McCain and New York Gov. George E. Pataki.
- Campaign watchers of Iowa's first-in-the-nation precinct caucuses and New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary say it is hardly unusual for hopeful candidates to make visits during a midterm election year - but observers in these states say the frequency of these visits and the number of possible candidates making them are unusually high — partly because the 2008 presidential election is highly unusual.
 - Since Vice President Dick Cheney has publicly ruled out running to succeed Bush in 2008, the election is the first without either an incumbent president or vice president on the ballot since 1952 — when Republican retired Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower defeated Illinois Democratic Gov. Adlai E. Stevenson.
- None of the prospective candidates has officially entered into the 2008 presidential race - and while they are undoubtedly trying to raise their own visibility, many of them are tying their visits to appearances on behalf of others running for local offices.

- Many national polls asking voters their preferences for the 2008 race have consistently shown New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton ahead for the Democratic nod and McCain with a lead for the Republican nomination.
 - New Hampshire pollster Andy Smith said, though, that those results are mostly based on Clinton's and McCain's high name recognition and their ability to revive connections from past campaigns.
 - Similar polls concerning the 2004 presidential race, conducted during the 2002 midterm elections, showed 2000 Democratic nominee Al Gore and Clinton well above other Democratic candidates — and neither ended up vying for the nomination.

****Conventions Will Be Back-to-Back for First Time in 52 Years***

The Republican National Committee announced Thursday, April 6th, that it has scheduled its 2008 presidential nominating convention for Sept. 1-4, less than a week after the Democrats formally select their White House nominee.

- The RNC's announcement means that the two presidential conventions will be held in consecutive weeks for the first time since 1956, when Democrats met in Chicago one week before the Republicans convened in San Francisco.
 - The 2008 GOP convention also will be the latest in history, surpassing the 2004 Republican gathering, which was held between Aug. 30 and Sept. 2 of that year.
 - The RNC said that it wanted to adhere to a longstanding tradition that the party in the White House holds the later convention.
- The Democratic National Committee (DNC) announced last summer that its 2008 convention would be held Aug. 25-28.
 - Democrats held their 2004 convention in late July, just before the Summer Olympics, which allowed Republicans more than a month to attack Democratic nominee John Kerry and also shape the message of their own convention.
- Neither party has selected a host city for the 2008 convention, though the selection process already is underway.
 - Eleven cities are in the running to host the Democratic convention: Anaheim, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Las Vegas, Minneapolis, **New Orleans**, New York, Orlando, Phoenix and San Antonio.
- The RNC originally invited 31 cities to host their convention, though it said it would accept bids from additional cities that expressed interest.
 - The cities the RNC has contacted are Anaheim, Atlanta, Boston, Charlotte, Columbus (Ohio), Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Kansas City (Mo.), Memphis, Miami, Minneapolis, Nashville, **New Orleans**, New York City, Orlando, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland (Ore.), Sacramento, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis and Tampa.
 - The RNC said a site selection committee will pick finalists by mid-summer and would visit those cities in August - both parties are expected to choose host cities by early next year.

****Senate Vote Shelves Immigration Bill***

The U.S. Senate sidetracked sweeping immigration legislation on April 7th - leaving in doubt prospects for passing a bill offering the hope of citizenship to millions of men, women and children living in the United States illegally.

- A carefully crafted compromise that supporters had claimed could win an overwhelming majority received only 38 of the 60 votes necessary to protect it from weakening amendments by opponents.
 - Republicans were united in the 38-60 parliamentary vote but Democrats, who have insisted on no amendments, lost six votes from their members.
- President Bush had prodded lawmakers to keep trying to reach an agreement, but both sides said the odds were increasing that a breakthrough would not occur until Congress returns from a two-week recess - Democrats and Republicans blamed each other for the stalemate.

**The mission of the Louisiana Rural Health Association is to serve as a unified voice for the promotion of rural health care through advocacy, education, and leadership. The information above was provided in part by the National Rural Health Association and gathered from various publicly released documents of news related sources.*