



Postcards from the Ledge

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It was just a few short weeks ago that many of us were in Dallas at the TAHU Legislative Day at the Capitol event. What an awesome event. Feedback from the membership in attendance is what sets the tone of TAHU's legislative agenda going forward. This feedback included everything from trying to address the obvious problems with the rising cost of health insurance premiums to strengthening the industry by calling for more education and accreditation of health insurance agents. Also included in the topics for discussion was the topic of rebating. I think we all expected TDI to issue a bulletin on this but not as soon as they did. In fact, I was at the NAHU Cap Conference event in Washington, DC when I saw the release of the bulletin. I think it's important for us to keep in mind that TDI did not create anything new with this memo. They simply restated the law that has been on the books for many years.

One thing that I want to caution our membership on regarding this is to not let it cause division among our diverse membership or allow for it to cause us to lose our focus of what the real issues are. The real issues that are of a higher priority are those of keeping insurance and health care solutions in the private market. The Legislative Council's primary objective is to strategically work with ideas that will have the potential to produce a positive legislative outcome to that effect.

So how was NAHU's Cap Conference? It was as awesome as ever. NAHU is very much on top of so many topics that they are too numerous to mention here but some of the main ones include SCHIP, even though it is likely nothing will get done under this current administration. Another issue of critical importance is mental health parity. The House is expected to vote soon on H.R. 1424. NAHU is very much opposed to this bill in its current language that allows for a much broader definition of mental health and would make coverage available for things like caffeine addiction and jet lag. In addition, NAHU is encouraging the Federal legislative body to encourage Americans to take personal financial responsibility and purchase Long Term Care Insurance. In the same breath NAHU is encouraging congressional action on Cost Containment as it relates to Health Savings Accounts, Transparency, Wellness, Health Information Technology, and Medical Malpractice. All of these issues are on the NAHU website in detail.

It is important that you, in your local chapter, begin now to meet with your State Legislators at least once a month. It's easier to deepen those relationships now while they are back in your district than to wait until they are in session and hard to reach. On our most recent TAHU Legislative Conference call we discussed that the local Legislative Chairs and/or the Presidents of each chapter need to set aside time to make contact with these lawmakers and spend time with them at least once a month discussing our issues. If you're not sure what those issues are then email one of us on the TAHU Legislative Council. We'll be happy to send you a list of topics with talking points. Legislators tell us, "If you guys don't help us find a solution, then we will." Folks, we are the experts. We're the ones in the field dealing with uninsured people everyday. I believe we have input they need from us that is vital in maintaining our important role of being involved in the delivery of health insurance products and related services. Don't lose focus from this.

Questions???? Contact any member of the Legislative Council: Kelly Fristoe – kfristoe@wf.net, Misty Baker – mistyb@onebox.com, Joe Phifer – joep@safeguard.net, Gary Waldron – gwaldron@prescottpaillet.com, Lee Manross – لمانross@aol.com, Cheryl Clark - checlark@teamumc.com, Mike McLaughlin - mike@corebenefits.net