

Crunch Time For Bills We're Tracking

With only about 28 days or so remaining in this regular session, it is crunch time at the Texas Legislature. In fact, because of House and Senate deadlines, if a bill hasn't been acted upon within the next eight days or so, it likely is dead for this session.



Misty Baker
Director, TAHU
Legislative Affairs



Postcards From the Ledge

A number of the bills the TAHU legislative team has been tracking, mostly good ones, are on the move. Some of the bad ones are still alive but we're working to keep them from progressing further. With the usual disclaimer that legislation is always subject to change – and quickly at this point in a session – here's a snapshot of where many of them are:

SB 22 – Long Term Care Partnership enabling legislation. This passed the Senate Thursday and now goes to the House. It has encountered no opposition and should get a quick vote there.

SB 23 – Small Employer Group bill that features the souped-up education and information program (TexLink) at TDI, a children's only group plan authorization, and the small employer group agent certification program. Passed the Senate last week, too; should pass the House.

SB 380 – Addresses **balance billing** by non-network providers working in a network facility. Requires disclosure that the patient/consumer may be balance billed and requires the provider to extend a payment plan if requested. Passed the Senate, headed to the House.

SB 1731 – Heavily revised transparency bill. Passed Senate State Affairs but not every stakeholder likes it so it probably will encounter some trouble in getting full Senate passage.

HB 1847 & HB 2252 – allows **ancillary benefits** like wellness programs and disease management to be part of an insurance policy and declares that they are not rebating. On Local & Uncontested calendars in both chambers so final passage looks good.

HB 839 – "Silent PPO" regulation bill. Awaiting action by the full House. May run into a time crunch getting through the whole process, though.

HB 882 / SB 922 – Regional Health Care Plans (Agents Need Not Apply). The House bill actually made it out of committee but will not get to the House floor. The Senate bill got a hearing, too, but is unlikely to move further.

HB 634 – Prohibits exclusions on benefits being paid for injuries due to the use of narcotics and intoxicants. Passed House Insurance Committee, awaiting full debate on the House floor.

HB 1269 – HSA state employee option. Out of House Insurance, should be up for floor debate this week. The chances of it making it through the Senate grow dimmer by the day, though.

HB 2016 / SB 1170 – Standardized provider-managed care network contracts. Both bills were heard in committee but appear to be stalled. That's a good thing.

Mandate bills – Three or four of the three dozen mandate bills that were filed have actually made it out committee, but, of course, they still must make it through the full House and Senate and the clock is ticking away against that possibility. The good news is that none of them is a major cost driver.

Connector Legislation – There were some really bad bills that included "connector" type arrangements. Fortunately, none of them got a hearing and should be dead.

We will update these bills and more in the report we will give at the TAHU board meeting in Galveston later this week -- another excellent reason to attend the convention!

(**Questions?** Contact any member of the Legislative Council: Misty Baker, mistyb@onebox.com; Rusty Rice, rrice@avesis.com; Jacqueline St. Hilaire, jacquelines@safeguard.net; Joe Phifer, JoeP@safeguard.net; Gary Waldron, gwaldron@prescottpaillet.com; Kelly Fristoe, kfristoe@wf.net; Lee Manross, lmanross@aol.com; Shirley Hutzler, shirly270@aol.com)