

Legislative Update
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2015 Legislature Convenes in Topeka

The 2015 Kansas Legislature opened for business Monday, January 12. The overriding issue this year is the State budget. With a \$270 million shortfall in the current fiscal year and nearly \$650 million projected in fiscal year 2016, the governor and legislators will be eyeing every agency budget to pick up savings.

As Kansas' law does not allow for a negative balance or deficit spending, the shortfall means significant cuts are ahead for some areas of State government. The governor is proposing some revenue enhancements, as well, that combined could add up to as much as \$211 million in fiscal year (FY) 2016.

Among the proposed enhancements is a cigarette tax increase, often considered a "consumption" or "sin" tax. *The governor is proposing a \$1.50 per pack increase on cigarettes, going from \$0.79 to \$2.29 per pack and also raising taxes on other tobacco products up to 25% of their wholesale price.* The Department of Revenue estimates this will generate \$80.8 million in FY 2016 and \$76.2 million in FY 2017. The last tobacco tax increase was in 2003.

The tobacco tax increase is one of three KAFP legislative priorities already garnering policymakers' attention this session. The other two are Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) scope of practice and Medicaid expansion.

The APRNs are expected to introduce a bill very much like they have in the previous two years, which would dramatically increase their scope of practice to be fairly level with that of physicians. While no bill has yet been introduced this session, one is coming and there may be a Senate committee hearing as soon as the end of January. Stay tuned!

The Kansas Hospital Association (KHA) is again leading the charge for expanding Medicaid coverage, as called for in the Affordable Care Act (ACA), to include persons up to 133% of poverty. The Legislature has been very adverse to this for two primary reasons: 1) there is a visceral negative reaction among many toward the ACA; and 2) there is a concern about future state costs associated with such an expansion. The second is a valid concern, as Medicaid continues to be a primary cost driver in the State budget.

The KHA is floating a proposal to "share" some of the cost in future years. While many legislators are still saying this is a "non-starter," many other Republican states have adopted the expansion and others are closely looking at it. The KHA's new proposal – which will be presented at the KAFP Advocacy Day – certainly provides a stronger incentive for Kansas to adopt the expansion.

This promises to be a very active year for KAFP and we'll keep you posted all along the way!

Advocacy Day Legislative Lineup

The KAFP annual Advocacy Day will include four leaders from the Kansas presenting short presentations on policies of interest to our members. From 4:00 – 5:30pm on Wednesday, Advocacy Day participants will be able to hear from, and ask questions of, leaders involved in determining health care laws in the 2015 session.

Those who will be presenting include: Rep. Louis Ruiz (D-Kansas City), House Assistant Minority Leader; Rep. Dan Hawkins (R-Wichita), House Health & Human Services Committee chair; Sen. Laura Kelly (D-Topeka), ranking minority member, Senate Public Health & Welfare and Senate Ways & Means committees; and Sen. Susan Wagle (R-Wichita), President of the Senate.

Please plan to attend and bring your questions to this excellent group of legislative leaders!

Family Doctor of the Day Recognition

The 2015 session begins the 37th year of KAFP providing Family Doctor of the Day (FDOD) services to the Kansas Legislature. While participating physicians report most of the activity to be fairly routine – blood pressure checks, allergies, coughs and colds – there have been incidences over the years of our folks intervening in cases of stroke, asthma attacks, and falls. Whatever the need, this program is highly regarded and greatly appreciated by legislators and legislative staff members.

On Monday, Dr. Doug Gruenbacher (Quinter), KAFP President, accepted recognition and an ovation in the Kansas House and Senate, on behalf of the Academy.

A special **thank you** also goes out to others providing FDOD service this past week: **Dr. Sheryl Beard**, Andover; and **Dr. Keith Wright**, Manhattan. We know that setting aside this kind of time in your already busy schedules is not easy, but your commitment is truly appreciated!

Committee Meetings: Week of January 19, 2015

Following is a list of selected legislative committee meetings of potential interest to KAFP members, as currently scheduled.

Tuesday, Jan 20

1:30pm, House Health & Human Services, Room 546-S

Presentations by:

- *Susan Mosier, Secretary, KDHE – KanCare*
- *Kari Bruffett, Secretary, Ks Dept for Aging & Disability Services – KanCare*
- *Bradly Raymond – PACE program update*

Wednesday, Jan 21

9:00am, House Vision 2020, Room 218-N

Informational Briefing on KanCare, rural health care, reimbursement, and tele-health, by Secretary Susan Mosier, KDHE

1:30pm, House Health & Human Services, Room 546-S

Informational hearing:

- *An act concerning criminal history record information*
- *An act concerning membership on the governor's behavioral health services planning council*

1:30pm, Senate Public Health & Welfare, Room 118-N

Informational hearing: Medical marijuana – Proponents

Thursday, Jan 22

1:30pm, Senate Public Health & Welfare, Room 118-N
Informational hearing: Medical marijuana - Opponents