

Legislative Update
April 3, 2015
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Legislature adjourns

The Legislature adjourned Thursday evening and will return April 29 for its Veto Session. The week was primarily focused on conference committees meeting to work out bill differences and to, then, passing those bills in both chambers.

This year the ending week was markedly different than previous years, because the House decided not to debate bills on the House floor – not even the “mega” budget. The Senate passed a budget and put it into HB 2135, making it eligible for a conference committee with House Appropriations Committee representatives. The House, then, negotiated from positions passed in committee action, rather than a budget passed by the full House. The conference committee reached a tentative agreement, but both chambers chose to hold further action on a budget bill until the Veto Session.

The House leadership’s rationale for not debating bills in the chamber was reportedly based on concerns of controversial amendments being made to bills in House debate. Three major items were being talked about as possible “wayward” amendments: expanding Medicaid to include families up to 138% of poverty, as provided under the Affordable Care Act; repealing the K-12 block grant proposal in SB 7, already signed by the governor; and repealing Common Core standards.

Legislative break

The legislative break is a good time to contact your legislators at home. Meet with them one-on-one, if possible, to discuss concerns or pieces you like about legislation in the Veto Session. Two major items on KAFP’s legislative priorities list that would be good to discuss while they’re home are the tobacco tax increase and Medicaid expansion.

- **Tobacco tax increase** – The governor called for an increase on cigarettes and tobacco products as part of his plan to balance the budget over the next two years. The proposal includes a cigarette tax increase of \$1.50 per 20-pack, going from \$0.79 to \$2.29, and an increase from 10%, up to 25%, of wholesale on tobacco products. This tax increase is estimated to raise \$80.8 million in FY 2016 and \$76.2 million in FY 2017. A few talking points:
 - Explain your position as a health care provider. Tobacco use and exposure remains the number one preventable cause of death in Kansas;
 - Smoking-related health costs add up to more than \$1 billion annually in Kansas, *approximately \$200 million of which are paid by KanCare/Medicaid* (which provides a good rationale for *why* the state should tax this product); and

- Increases have been shown to be especially effective in preventing youth from smoking or starting to smoke.
- The tobacco tax is a stable and sustainable revenue source.
- **Medicaid expansion** – The Affordable Care Act included provisions for expanding Medicaid health care benefits to adults up to 138% of the federal poverty level. The House Health and Human Services Committee held hearings on HB 2319, which would allow for the expansion, but no further action has been taken on the bill.
 - The best talking points come from your own experience and knowledge base, as a health care provider – the importance of adults having a medical home; increasing disease management and disease prevention, which significantly lowers health care costs; decreased use of the emergency room; the impact the uninsured are having on hospitals and rural medicine in our state. Again, *your own perspective* will have the greatest impact.

More information on these may be obtained from KAFP or at the KAFP website. Look for an Action Alert on these two important topics soon!

Family Doctor of the Day Recognition

A special **thank you** goes out to those providing FDOD services this past week: **Dr. Belinda Vail**, KCK; **Dr. Sheryl Beard**, Andover; and **Dr. John Eplee**, Atchison. (Dr. Deb Doubek, Manhattan, signed up for Friday, but the Legislature did not meet that day.) We know that setting aside this kind of time in your already busy schedules is not easy, but your commitment is truly appreciated!