

Part Two in a Series: What We Can Learn From 2005 Legislative Decisions

In her final installment in this series, Legislative Chair Connie Zarkowski illustrates the cause and effect relationships inherent in many of our state's 2005 legislative decisions.

HSAs

In 2005, Commissioner John Garamendi blasted Health Savings Accounts and Consumer-Directed Health Plans and stressed his demand for a universal, government-run health care system. He did so without being aware of the actual benefits offered in HSA plans.

The Galen Institute took him on point by point, showing that the statistics and the facts contradict Mr. Garamendi's assertions that HSA plans exploit the poor who can't afford to pay the high deductibles involved. The Institute demonstrated that low premiums caused people to buy insurance who would otherwise have remained in the ranks of the uninsured. Mr. Garamendi also seemed unaware that he had approved all the insurance policies he so vehemently criticized.

What does this tell us? Reducing the ranks of the uninsured will not assist Mr. Garamendi's agenda. The commissioner's run for Lieutenant Governor will include a single-payer platform. We need to be alert. Very alert.

California Healthy Kids Insurance Program

AB 772 was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger. The bill sought to increase coverage for children in a variety of ways, including: raising the income cut-off point for eligibility for subsidized public insurance programs and otherwise liberalizing eligibility standards; simplifying and

streamlining enrollment in Medi-Cal and Healthy Families; improving retention rates in these programs by making the process substantially easier; and supporting enrollment and retention strategies of local children's coverage initiatives.

What is this telling us?

The perception exists that if California subsidizes coverage for children (or adults), those who are currently uninsured will enroll. This perception fails to take into account the undocumented, the invincible young, the indifferent, those in transition, the homeless, the uneducated, or those on the fringes of society who are not reachable by social programs. There is also the existence of the unintended consequence of fully subsidized social programs. Many who are eligible for coverage fail or refuse to enroll in any program with a cost attached, because the public safety net of "free" is always there. Some will never enroll due to their circumstances, but if there is a consequence to not enrolling, such as having to pay their own bills for medical services, (even on a sliding income scale) many will enroll in the available programs or buy coverage. We need to counter the erroneous perception that social programs alone will solve the uninsured problem and offer affordable alternatives that encourage personal accountability that can be supported by legislators and the public.



Leg Chair Connie Zarkowski

President's Message

Hello and Happy February. Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. I have received a lot of positive feedback on it. Our intention was to make you feel more connected, which I think is happening.



We had a great meeting in January. Steve Cain from Marsh Private Client Services spoke to us on Long Term Care; the value of having it as well as the benefits of selling it. He was very knowledgeable and motivating.

February is an exciting month with VCAHU. We have Tom Bruderle from NAHU giving us a CE course on February 16. The course is called, "Legislative Update: A Federal Perspective from the 109th Congress." Tom directs NAHU's lobbying efforts and has more than 20 years of Capitol Hill experience. He is well-informed and will be giving us the latest news from the Hill. LAAHU, our neighboring chapter, will have him speak in the morning, and we are privileged to have him in the afternoon. I hope you will attend.

February is also our "Bring a Non-member to Lunch" day. Bring a non-member, and lunch costs only \$20 each for you and your guest. If the non-member joins on February 16, he or she will receive \$50 toward their membership dues from Warner Pacific, and the existing member will receive 10 raffle tickets for use at our March meeting.

If this wasn't enough, February is our HUPAC month. We are raffling off a portable DVD player, and tickets are only \$20 each. This is an easy way to support HUPAC.

I look forward to seeing you on Thursday, February 16.

Debbie Blander
VCAHU President
2005-2006

What We Can Learn From 2005 Legislative Decisions (continued from page 1)

2006

Upcoming legislation is stressing provider responsibility to tighten up its application notices to consumers and to have written procedures for underwriting that give specifics when denying or rating up coverage. Proposed legislation will also extend some of the unique provider rights under DMHC to the DOI.

Now here's your 2006 quiz, based on our 2005 history:

1. Single Payer ___ will ___ will not pass into law.
2. Insurance agents ___ will ___ will not be gainfully employed by the end of the year.

Can you influence the answers? I think you already know. Be a member of VCAHU, contribute heavily to CAHU PAC, bring in more members, be pro-active, and contribute your time, your energy and your expertise. Individually and together we create our own future and influence that of the private health insurance consumers. If we don't, others will do it for us. And we may not like it.

Coming Events

- **Thursday, February 16 (please note day change)** - Monthly Membership lunch meeting (11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.), Courtyard by Marriott - Oxnard, **Speaker: Tom Bruderle, NAHU, "Legislative Update" (1 hour CE pending)**
- **March 7** - Board meeting, 9 - 11 a.m.
- **March 21** - Monthly Membership lunch meeting (11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.), Courtyard by Marriott - Oxnard, **Topic: "Electronic Medical Records" (1 hour CE pending)**
- **April 4** - Board meeting, 9 - 11 a.m.
- **April 18** - Monthly Membership lunch meeting (11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.), Courtyard by Marriott - Oxnard, **Speaker: Dr. Phil Kurzner, Candidate for Insurance Commissioner (Panel discussion pending)**



Save The Date!

9th Annual

**Ventura County Health
Underwriters Golf Tournament**

May 1, 2006



Registration:

11:30 am

Lunch:

12:00 noon

Location:

Sterling Hills Golf Club

901 Sterling Hills Drive

Camarillo, CA

Phone: (805) 987-3446

Shotgun

Start:

1:00 pm

Carrier Reps...Invite your agents NOW!!

Support our State and National Lobbyists

by Christopher Denton, PAC Chair

Thank you to all who made our 4th quarter raffle so successful; we raised a little over \$1,400. For the 1st quarter of 2006, our focus will be the HUPAC raffle. A \$20 donation gives you a chance to win a portable DVD player. Please see any Ventura chapter board member, or contact me. Any donation for this raffle will go toward our National Political Action Committee. Remember, you **must** be a current member in good standing in order to purchase a ticket.

As for our monthly contributions, they are as follows: debit card — \$182; credit card — \$493. We are slowly but surely cracking the \$23,200 nut. Consider making a monthly contribution if you like and want to keep your job. You know from reading Connie Zarkowski's legislative articles that there is much going on in the legislature that could have a negative impact on our industry. Download the contribution form from the VCAHU website today!

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