

Legislative Update

2012 Legislative Session – Week 1

Friday, January 13, 2012 marked the end of Week 1 of the 2012 Legislative Session. The following information highlights the current status on priorities and other issues of interest to Aging Network. Over the next seven weeks, please stay tuned for additional information regarding session developments. Most importantly, please remain actively involved in the legislative process, personally advocating with your local state elected officials throughout the 2012 Legislative Session by writing letters, emailing, etc. on the priority issues below. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Beck

President, PinPoint Results

Background Screening Legislation: Multiple meetings were held this week with House and Senate sponsors and their staff on the background screening legislation that has been filed to address the concerns of the Aging Network. Both House Bill 943 by Representative Holder and Senate Bill 320 have been filed and given their committees of reference where the bills will be heard.

House Bill 943 is on the House Health and Human Services Access Subcommittee meeting agenda for 1/17/12. The committee meeting will begin at 3:30 in Room 212 of the Knott Building attached to the Capitol Complex. Aging Advocates are encouraged to attend this meeting and voice your support of this important legislation. An amendment to the House bill has been drafted that will address the concerns relating to volunteers working less than 20 hours per month, caregivers, and finally a resolution for the redundant background screening requirement which is currently occurring/required for service provider staff providing services under the Agency for Health Care Administration Medicaid program and the Department of Elder Affairs Medicaid Waiver programs. The amendment that has been prepared has the support of the Governor's Office.

We hope to see the Senate Bill move in Week 3 of the 2012 Legislative Session.

State Revenue Estimating Conference: All eyes were focused upon this week's General Revenue estimating conference with the hope that the official state revenue forecast would be increased for the 2012-2013 fiscal year. The good news is that revenue projections remained essentially unchanged. The bad news is the new revenue projections remained essentially unchanged. In other words, despite signs of an improving economy, state revenue collections are not projected to grow

beyond the fall 2011 estimates leaving a projected revenue shortfall needed to meet growing/forecasted state needs for education, health care, and other state priorities of approximately \$1.6 to \$2 Billion. A link to the estimating conference executive summary follows below. It will be a very, very challenging budget cycle during the 2012 Legislative Session and ALL programs in ALL policy areas are at risk of reduction.

<http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/conferences/generalrevenue/grsummary.pdf>

Appropriations: House and Senate Appropriations Committees met this week to review the Governor's budget recommendations. As many of you know by now, the Governor's budget recommends significant reductions to Florida's Medicaid program with \$1.9 billion in reductions targeted toward Medicaid reimbursement rates paid to Hospitals. The Governor's budget redirects one billion of this Medicaid reduction toward increasing K-12 per student funding. The remaining reductions to Hospital reimbursement rates are redirected toward other budget priorities and to avoid additional cuts to other important programs, including home and community care programs for seniors. The Governor's budget recommendations hold harmless from cuts, all programs administered by the Department of Elder Affairs. Good job everyone for your advocacy with the Governor and DOEA to hold these programs harmless from reduction in the Governor's recommended budget!

Appropriations committees are scheduled to continue meeting during Week 2 of the 2012 legislative session. The House appears to be holding on to its policy to move forward with developing a budget for FY 2012-2013 on schedule while the Senate leadership continues to discuss delaying the budget until after the next official March 2012 revenue estimating conference is held. Incoming Senate President Don Gaetz is presently circulating a letter to all Senators asking them to sign-on to a proposal to delay the budget process until the March revenue estimate. We will keep you aware of further developments on this issue.

Attached below are the website links to the House and Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committees. All Aging Advocates are encouraged to reach out to these elected officials, particularly members that represent your community, in the coming 2-4 weeks and encourage them to preserve funding for aging programs and services administered by the Department of Elder Affairs. With Florida facing its 6th straight year of budget reductions, without your voice and your efforts to educate Florida's elected officials on the importance and value of home and community care for seniors, these programs are at risk of reduction.

House Healthcare Appropriations Subcommittee link:

<http://www.myfloridahouse.com/Sections/Committees/committeesdetail.aspx?SessionId=70&CommitteeId=2599>

Senate Health & Human Services Appropriations Committee link:

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/Show/BHA/>