

BUDGET, INFORMATION AND LEGISLATION IN THE CAPITOL

The General Assembly is into its sixth month of the 2019-2020 session, attempting to pass a balanced state general fund budget by the end of June. PA-ACP has been working with House and Senate leadership, the Wolf Administration, and key committees on more than a dozen key pieces of priority legislation in the pipeline for the two-year session in addition to health related budget issues.

After special elections May 21, the State Senate remains in Republican control with a 28-22 majority, and the State House of Representatives also is Republican, by a 109-93 margin with one vacancy.

During that first six months, the General Assembly, with new leadership, new committee chairs, eight new Senators and 48 new House members spent much time conducting “informational hearings,” educating the newly elected officials and new Committee members about major policy issues.

Besides the budget, Medicaid issues, health care and GME funding, the legislature is focusing on a several pieces of legislation important to them and the administration. In early June, House Majority Leader Brian Cutler introduced legislation to create a state level exchange, rather than continuing to work with the federal health care exchange. The House is preparing to move surprise balance billing legislation for Pennsylvania patients. The Senate is moving legislation allowing CRNPs to practice independent of collaborative agreements, and the legislature and Administration continue focusing on bills regarding opioids and controlled substances, and state immunization laws.

The Chapter has continued efforts to oppose any changes in the state venue laws governing medical malpractice suits, worked with a coalition of dozens of physician and patient organizations to draft and introduce legislation reforming prior authorization rules, and testified on future legislation regulating telemedicine and drug price transparency.

On the venue issue, PA-ACP learned of a proposed Court rule change to allow pre-2003 venue shopping on Christmas Eve, 2018, wrote the Supreme Court opposing that change, and asked members to do the same. The proposed change would allow medical malpractice claims to be filed in counties other than where the alleged action occurred. The Chapter met with legislative leaders and supported efforts by Senate Judiciary Committee chair Lisa Baker to pass SR 20 to require the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study the issue prior to any court decision. We plan to continue working through a public opinion and social media campaign to pressure the court to reject those changes to pre-2003 venue rules.

The costs and impact on patients and physician practices from the growth and breadth of prior authorization requirements can't be underestimated. PA-ACP has worked with legislators, Committee chairs and leadership to get commitments for legislation reforming PA processes. Rep. Steve Mentzer (R, Lancaster) is the prime sponsor of the bill and we've worked to secure 31 cosponsors to date. PA-ACP is continuing to ask its members to reach out to their local state representatives to sign on to the bill, which we hope to move from the House Insurance Committee this fall. Look for ways you can help in this effort, including letters to your elected officials, draft op/ed pieces and a full scale social media campaign to emphasize the scope of this issue.

The State Senate again has moved SB 25, the CRNP independent practice bill, which it passed by a 42-7 vote in 2017. We expect the Senate to again pass this bill, and PA-ACP will continue to work with the House of Representatives to ensure that patients receive only the best quality care. The nurse

practitioners now enjoy the support of the Hospital and Health System Alliance of PA, the AARP, and the PA Rural Health Association. As with the other issues PA-ACP represents you for, more information and suggestions on how you can help are detailed on the Chapter's new website at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

To learn more about these and other issues, and how you can help, check the website regularly and follow PA-ACP on Facebook at Twitter. And look for another update following passage of the state budget when the General Assembly recesses for the summer in late June or July.