

Is There a “Perfect Storm” in the California Medical Horizon?

CAL/AAEM Legislative Update

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Possible budget cuts we face with our state fiscal crisis include Emergency Medical Services, Eligibility Cuts, Provider Rate Cuts and redirection of the \$24.8 million Cigarette Tax funds. Up to now no definitive action has occurred on the current year budget to affect Emergency Physicians. We have had some great successes in the past year keeping Medical Funding (AB3006) and keeping family Medi-Cal eligibility.

- SB 5x-Romero: “Nickel a drink” - Support

Identical to SB 108, this bill has passed the Senate Health and Human Services Committee by an 8-2 vote. This bill would place a nickel-a-drink fee on alcoholic beverages hoping to raise approximately \$700 million to fund ED and Trauma Centers. Nickel a drink is supported by Cal/ACEP, the CMA and 65 other organizations. It was opposed by the wine and liquor industry.

- AB372- Kehoe- Support position

This bill would place a fee on HMOs and Health insurers to fund poison control centers.

- AB1401-Wolk- Watch position

California Hospital Association-sponsored bill, provides information for charity care to uninsured patients. This also assists patients in knowing if they are eligible for government sponsored programs, hospital charity or discounted payment policy.

- AB1628- Frommer- Oppose unless amended

HMO sponsored legislation to require hospitals to call the HMO in order to be reimbursed post patient stabilization.

- SB 151- Burton- Support position

California Medical Association sponsored bill eliminating triplicate prescriptions for schedule II controlled substances.

As we were preparing in May to publish CaJEM’s Spring 2003 issue, we received additional great news. This will be detailed in the July-September 2003 issue. However, in summary, the Governor’s May revision to the Budget included the same \$24.8 Million which he has been allocating for the last 4 year to emergency physicians and on-call physicians through the Maddy EMS Funds. This is indeed great news considering the budget crisis and widespread cuts in healthcare and other services across the state. If you recall from our previous update, this sum had been removed from the Governor’s State budget and was presumed a major reduction in funds allocated to our workforce to compensate them for unfunded patient emergency care. Of course, this still needs to be approved by the state legislature. However, the inclusion in the Governors’ budget is already a major victory and obstacle that was surpassed.

In other good news, the Governor reversed his prior decision to cut Medi-Cal eligibility, keeping 250,000 to 300,000 people on the Medi-Cal program. These patients would have otherwise become uninsured and again caused a major source of loss of revenue to emergency physicians.

Again, these are two major great news - particularly in the current environment of inflation and budget cuts. This goes again to demonstrate the critical importance of your contribution to our Emergency Physician legislative activities such as the CAL/ACEP Legislative Annual Conference which we co-sponsored this year, and most importantly to the one united EMPAC fund. Your contributions are vital to our success in the State Capital. We need your help and support. This can be easily submitted by sending a check to EMPAC at the CAL/AAEM Office in Calabasas or by e-mailing calaaem@aaem.org for additional instructions. Thank you for your confidence and support.