Cut Medicaid benefits, not access, states urged
Better to trim aid than end it, U.S. says
By Democrat-Gazette Press Services
Washington — The Obama administration is encouraging states to reduce health benefits to the poor instead of trimming eligibility for Medicaid, according to a letter sent to governors Thursday.

Abortion-coverage prospects unclear
No state insurer decision yet on extra policy outside new exchanges
By Sarah D. Wire
The Arkansas Constitution and federal law limit when an abortion can be paid for with public money. Women who participate in the taxpayer-subsidized insurance exchanges established under the federal health-care law will have to find and pay for separate insurance to cover the cost of an abortion or find some other way to pay for it.

Officials looking at free birth control under law
By Robert Pear, The New York Times
The Obama administration is examining whether the new health-care law can be used to require insurance plans to offer contraceptives and other family planning services to women free of charge.

Senate rejects health-law repeal
In 51-47 vote, Pryor sides with majority; Boozman on losing end
By Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Staff and Wire Reports
Senate Democrats on Wednesday defeated a Republican effort to repeal President Barack Obama’s health-care overhaul.

Jay Bradford, Insurance Commissioner, gave a presentation on Health Insurance Exchanges: Requirements for the State under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.
Front row:
Back row:

Minority Health Consortium in Partnership with AARP hosted its fourth Legislative Update Breakfast on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 with approximately 40 in attendance.
Maria Reynolds-Diaz reviewed AARP’s outreach efforts

- AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization for people over 50
- 8 districts in Arkansas, hundreds of volunteer leaders and e-activists
- Targeted African American community in Little Rock and the Delta
- Sponsored Walgreens bus, which performed 11,200 screenings

Herb Sanderson introduced legislative priorities:

#1: Give consumers a choice for long term care (Herb Sanderson, AARP staff)

- Right now, adults cannot get home care, only nursing home care
- Allowing them to access home care services would decrease costs and improve quality of life for many seniors in the state

#2: Increase funding for senior centers (Elaine Burbank, Carelink)

- Asking for $2.3 million to restore funding levels
- Highlighted importance of Meals on Wheels program, which now has 500 people on the waiting list
- Arkansas is the 3rd hungriest state in the nation
- Seniors who cannot feed themselves may end up in the nursing home
- 1 year of meals costs as much as 1 week in a nursing home or 1 day in a hospital

#3: HIT & Health Information Exchange (Jim Penrod, AARP volunteer)

- Arkansas has receive $0.5 billion in federal grants to support these efforts
- Highlighted where the money is already being spent by Ray Scott, AMFC, clinics, etc.
- Benefits for Arkansas
  - Improve quality
  - Better knowledge for consumers
  - Right information for providers at the right time
  - Improve public health reporting
  - Reduce fraud in medical systems payment
- Current challenge is becoming self-supporting after grant period ends
- Ray Scott is developing legislation that would formally create the Office of Health Information Technology as some kind of public-private partnership

#4: Address health care workforce shortages (Gloria Gordon, AARP volunteer)

- No current legislation, but they want to support the creation of a comprehensive strategy to address the shortage of home health workers
- Shortage is fueled by low salaries, poor incentives, no career ladders
- Supporting efforts at ACHI to create a strategic plan
- Coordinating with the Department of Workforce Services to bring in federal funding

Special thanks to all the Legislators who supported the Legislative Breakfast.
**Consortium Legislative Breakfast Forum Schedule:**

**Schedule To Date:**

**Arkansas Department of Health/HHI** – February 15, 2011 at Capitol Cafe

**Arkansas Cancer Coalition** – February 22, 2011 at Capitol Hill* (*note change in location)

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**Senate & House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee Meetings**

**House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee** – Every Tuesday and Thursday at 10 am in Rm 130

**Senate Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee** – Every Wednesday and some Friday at 10 am in Rm 272

*(Note: Senate Public Health Committee may not meet every Friday; therefore, please check schedule weekly and we will keep you abreast of whether any meeting(s) have been cancelled).*

- If you are interested in speaking at any committee meeting, please contact Legislative Bureau to request adding your name to the agenda.

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**Public Health Bill Updates:**

- Pamela Hayes is monitoring all bills that have been filed daily.
- You will receive a summary of legislation in weekly emails regarding any bills that may impact the consortium.

(ctrl+click to view full bills)

**SB98**  
*Senator D. Wyatt amended and re-referred to Senate Committee*

**AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSES TO ENTER INTO COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTERS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.*
SB119
Senator Chesterfield passed Senate committee
AN ACT TO CREATE THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF 9 WOMEN; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

SB 65
Senator J. Jeffress amended and re-referred to Senate Committee
AN ACT TO IMPROVE ENROLLMENT OF ARKANSAS CHILDREN IN 9 THE ARKIDS FIRST A AND B MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS; 10 AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

SB113 amended
Senator Bledsoe
AN ACT TO PROHIBIT HEALTH INSURANCE EXCHANGE POLICIES FROM OFFERING COVERAGE FOR ABORTIONS EXCEPT THROUGH A SEPARATE RIDER.

SB 42 passed Senate committee
Senators D. Johnson, P. Malone, Crumbly
AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE DENTAL HYGIENISTS TO PERFORM DENTAL HYGIENE PROCEDURES FOR PERSONS IN PUBLIC SETTINGS WITHOUT THE SUPERVISION OF A DENTIST.

SB 43 passed Senate committee
Senators D. Johnson, P. Malone, Crumbly
AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE PHYSICIANS AND NURSES TO APPLY FLUORIDE VARNISH TO A CHILD'S TEETH AFTER APPROPRIATE TRAINING.

SB165 passed Senate Committee
D. Johnson
AN ACT TO CLARIFY THE LICENSURE PROCESS FOR DENTISTS AND REGISTERED DENTAL HYGIENISTS AND TO REMOVE OBSOLETE LANGUAGE REGARDING LICENSURE TESTING.

SB77 passed Senate Committee
J. Taylor
HONOR PERSONS WHO HAVE PROVIDED LIVING KIDNEY DONATIONS TO ARKANSANS IN NEED OF KIDNEY TRANSPLANTATION.

HB1317 passed House Committee
Rep. Tyler
AN ACT TO EXPAND THE IMMUNIZATION REGISTRY TO BETTER 8 PROTECT THE CITIZENS OF ARKANSAS; AND FOR OTHER 9 PURPOSES.

- If any consortium member has: (a) an event scheduled; (b) legislation filed; (c) presentation before committee; (d) legislation coming up for a vote in committee or House/Senate; (e) press conference; (f) or news to share…please forward information to Pamela Hayes at pamela.hayes@arkansas.gov.
- We will place information on master calendar, AMHC website and AMHC facebook page.
- If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to call Kendal Booker at 501.563.0731, or email kbooker00@yahoo.com.
News from Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families

Child Advocates Urge Passage of ARKids Red Tape Bill
February 8th 2011

More than 100 child advocates and children symbolically cut red tape to encourage passage of bill to streamline health insurance enrollment. LITTLE ROCK—More than 100 child advocates and children symbolically ripped through red tape today at the Capitol to urge the passage of a bill that would streamline ARKids First enrollment and renewal procedures. Equipped with safety...[Read More]