

the Reporter

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FALL VETO SESSION BEGINS

The Illinois General Assembly returned to Springfield this week for its annual Fall Veto Session. It's not clear yet whether lawmakers will take major action on unfinished business from the Spring Session related to the state budget and campaign finance reform.

However, IHA is aware of discussions that, if implemented, would undermine the State Prompt Payment Act by substantially reducing the interest penalty. Under one potential proposal, the interest penalty for late payments by the state to vendors, including Medicaid providers, would be reduced to the Federal Funds rate, currently at a minuscule level of just 0.139%. The current interest penalty under the State Prompt Pay Act is 1% a month. Going to the Federal Funds rate would reduce the interest penalty for a \$50,000 claim that is 30 days late from \$500 to \$5.79 – or nearly a 100-fold decrease. Reducing the interest penalty to such a negligible level makes the Prompt Pay Act, which was intended to be an incentive to the state to pay claims on a timely basis, almost meaningless, and might actually persuade the state not to pay its bills on a timely basis. [Click here](#) to contact your legislators to oppose any proposal that would reduce the interest penalty in the Prompt Pay Act.

On another budget-related issue, both the Senate and House approved legislation authorizing \$200 million to fully fund Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants for low-income college students for the rest of the fiscal year. They did not raise taxes or fees to fund the additional spending, saying that previously allocated discretionary funding could be used to finance MAP. However, the much larger issue of potential tax increases to address the state's multi-billion dollar budget gap is not expected to be taken up by the General Assembly until next February.

THIS WEEK'S MAIL

[IHFSRB Notices](#)
TO: CEOs; VPs, Planning, Marketing & Business Development

[Interactive Patient Education Solution Webinar, by PatientEDU](#)

TO: CEOs; CFOs; CIOs; CNEs; Head of Risk Management

[October CON Docket](#)
(password required)

[Upcoming Quality and Public Reporting Opportunities](#)

TO: CEOs; CFOs; CMOs; CMIOs; CIOs; CQOs; CNEs; PR Directors, COMPdata Contacts

Register Now! [Illinois Society for Healthcare Marketing & Public Relations \(ISHMPR\) 2009 Conference and Pinnacle Awards](#)

[This Week's Mail Archive](#)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Oct. 20: *IHA Management Institute 201: [Business of Planning - Managing Process, Projects, and People](#)*

Oct. 20: [Beyond Physician Satisfaction - Using Marketing Research to Drive Physician Outreach Strategies](#)

Oct. 21: [Illinois Association of Healthcare Attorneys \(IAHA\) 27th Annual Health Law Symposium](#)

Oct. 21: [Your Hospital's Emergency Preparedness: Taking a Closer Look](#)

Oct. 23: [So You Want to](#)

The Veto Session is scheduled to run through Oct. 30. IHA will hold its COWL reception at the Sangamo Club in Springfield Oct. 28 for women legislative and hospital leaders.

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SENATE DEMS WORK TO MERGE HEALTH BILLS

The U.S. Senate Finance Committee approved its health care reform proposal by a 14-9 vote Oct. 13. Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) was the first Republican in Congress to support a Democratic health care reform plan, although she would not commit to voting for the bill on the floor. Senate Democratic leaders and White House officials are now trying to merge the Finance Committee bill with one (S.1679) passed earlier this year by the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee.

A key sticking point continues to be whether to include a public option for insurance coverage. The Senate HELP Committee bill includes the public insurance option, backed by liberal Democrats, as a way to create competition in the insurance market, but the Finance bill does not. Other differences to be hammered out in the bills include whether to require employers to provide health insurance, the amount of subsidies offered to help lower- and middle-income people buy insurance and taxes to be imposed to pay for the plan.

On the House side Democratic leaders continue working to build consensus and merge into a single bill the three separate committee versions of H.R. 3200 passed by the Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Education and Labor committees. Reportedly, in an effort to placate Democratic members divided on whether to support a public option that pays providers Medicare or negotiated rates, Speaker Pelosi proposed paying hospitals 5% above Medicare rates. This step is aimed at bringing more moderate Democrats on board and gaining support from others who would see it as helping ease the pressure on rural hospitals.

IHA and AHA still have concerns about several aspects of the various bills, including the need to:

- Increase the number of people covered;
- Eliminate a public option based on Medicare rates;
- Include meaningful medical liability reforms;
- Narrow the hospital readmissions policy; and
- Include hospitals in accountable care organizations.

IHA continues to speak out on behalf of hospitals at various forums on health care reform. Howard Peters, senior vice president, Government Relations, will be a featured speaker at a [public forum](#) on Oct. 19 at Harold Washington College in Chicago sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Chicago.

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[Clinically Integrate with Your Doctors? Have You Signed Your Informed Consent?](#)

Oct. 29: [Continuous Service Readiness \(CSR\) Seminar and Workshop](#)

[Education Programs](#)

[COMPdata Programs](#)

STATE PROCLAMATIONS ON FLU VACCINATIONS

The Governor, Illinois Dept. of Public Health and Dept. of Professional and Financial Regulation this week issued a coordinated series of [proclamations](#) to ensure that there are enough certified and licensed health care professionals to administer H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines. Under the proclamations, which temporarily modify the scopes of practice for several medical professionals, the following health care professionals will be able to administer the vaccines – upon meeting [specified training and required criteria](#):

- Emergency Medical Technicians (intermediate and paramedic);
- Pharmacists (to those age 9 and older);
- Dentists;
- APNs, LPNs and RNs;
- Medical residents;
- Physician assistants; and
- Properly trained and supervised pharmacy, nursing and third- and fourth-year medical students.

To find out where and when the new H1N1 vaccine will be available in local communities, state officials are advising the public to contact their local health department or to go to the web site, <http://www.ready.illinois.gov/>.

This week, CDC issued its most recent [guidance for H1N1 infection control procedures](#) and a [Q&A on respiratory protection](#). OSHA followed up with a [statement](#) regarding its inspections to ensure compliance with the CDC guidance.

Meanwhile, the federal government's www.flu.gov web site has two new features to help individuals and families: a self-evaluation section for adults aimed at determining whether flu is present, and guidance on self-care, preventing transmission, and warning signs of serious disease. "Flu Myths and Facts" provides accurate refutations of common misconceptions about vaccinations and the disease itself.

IHA continues to post the latest updates on H1N1 on its [web site](#), including information from IDPH and CDC.

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IHA/IDPH TO HOLD CALL ON NEW IDPH WEB SITE

IDPH has indicated it will launch its new web site on hospital quality and other data, collected under the Hospital Report Card and Consumer Guide to Health Care, by the end of this month. To help members learn more about the specifics of the web site, IHA has arranged a conference call with IDPH on Thursday, Oct. 22 at 10 a.m. Members were sent a [memo](#) about the conference call, which also is included in *This Week's Mail*. See [IDPH's FAQ](#) about the web site.

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IHA FLYAROUND MEETINGS START OCT. 30

Hospital leaders are invited to attend the upcoming IHA regional flyaround meetings, which will feature new IHA President Maryjane Wurth and 2010 IHA Board Chair-elect Pat Magoon, President and CEO, **Children's Memorial Hospital**, Chicago. The meetings will focus on IHA's strategic goals for the coming year and upcoming key issues and challenges for the hospital community. [Meetings](#) will be held on:

- Oct. 30: Regions 2A/B/C, Oak Brook;
- Nov. 3: Region 4, Collinsville;
- Nov. 3: Region 5, Mount Vernon;
- Nov. 13: Regions 3A/3B, Springfield;
- Nov. 18: Region 1B, Kewanee; and
- Nov. 30: Region 1A, Freeport.

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E-HEALTH CARE WORKER REGISTRY STARTING

After much anticipation, the Illinois Dept. of Public Health is ready to begin its incremental roll out of the new electronic fingerprint background check and electronic Health Care Worker Registry. The first hospitals to start using the new electronic fingerprint process for new hires begins Nov. 1, 2009, and includes only those hospitals in the ten counties that participated in the federal fingerprint pilot program (Jo Davies, Stephenson, Winnebago, Boone, McHenry, Lake, Carroll, Ogle, Whiteside, and Lee). By Dec. 1, all other facilities in those ten counties also will start using the new fingerprint process.

Any hospitals in these first two roll-outs that have not registered for access to the department's Web Portal and Health Care Worker Registry should register now. For questions, contact [Jonna Veach](#) at IDPH or call 217-785-9165.

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BRIEFLY NOTED

- | The Medicare RAC audit process is officially underway in Illinois with the release this week of new audit issues by CGI Technologies and Solutions that have been approved by CMS. [Click here](#) for a detailed memo (**password required**).
- | The Illinois Dept. of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) has posted a new practitioner fee [schedule](#) effective Oct. 1, 2009. Please note that the document is more than 500 pages long and may take time to download.
- | HFS begins its Fall 2009 Outreach Tour on Oct. 22. [Register online](#) for sessions throughout the state. Information will be provided on changes and policy updates on many programs.
- | The Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS) presented the HHS Medal of Honor for Organ Donation to 428 hospitals for

achieving and sustaining a donation rate of 75% or more of eligible donors at their facilities. Congratulations to our [Illinois hospitals](#) who received 23 medals, including two gold, 19 silver and two bronze.

- | AHA has mailed members an executive briefing book to help hospitals prepare to transition to the 10th edition of the International Classification of Diseases clinical coding system (ICD-10). Copies of the guide are available for members on the [AHA web site](#).

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STUDIES AND SURVEYS IN THE NEWS

- | U.S. employers and employees will face higher medical insurance costs in 2010, according to a [study](#) from Towers Perrin. Employers will pay 7% more for medical benefit expenses in 2010, totaling more than \$10,000 per employee for the first time. Employee contributions are expected to rise 10% next year.
- | A [national poll](#) from Consumers Union finds that 51% of Americans have been forced to make difficult health choices in the past year such as putting off doctor visits or declining medical tests due to cost. In addition, 59% said their health care costs had increased in the past two years more than their other expenses. For the first time in its 73-year history, Consumers Union will run [television ads](#) advocating health care reform.

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