

UTAH HEALTH POLICY PROJECT

HEALTH MATTERS... ON THE HILL



Health Matters –E-Newsletter On the Hill Edition

January 30, 2009

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1. **Tobacco Tax Bill Increase with revenue going to health being heard tomorrow! We need your help!**

Tobacco Tax Amendments, SB 114 (Sen. Christensen), is being heard by the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee this Friday at 2:15pm in Room 250 in the State Capitol.

This tax increase is critical in helping Medicaid, CHIP, and other public health programs weather the economic downturn. The legislation will increase Utah's tobacco tax to \$2 pack with revenues going to health programs (including Medicaid), tobacco cessation, and cancer research. A Salt Lake Tribune poll this week found that 66% of Utahns support increasing the tobacco tax. Unfortunately the powers that be are trying to kill this legislation and has assigned this bill to an unfriendly committee.

Please call members of Senate Revenue and Taxation and tell them support raising the tobacco tax!

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Niederhauser, Chair

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2. Health and Human Services Appropriations wants to hear from providers about the budget cuts this Monday

HHS Appropriations is soliciting testimony from providers about the impact of the proposed budget cuts. An overview of the cuts can be [found here](#). The committee has scheduled **Monday, February 2nd from 2pm to 5pm** to hear from any providers willing testify. If you are a health care provider impacted by the proposed Medicaid and other health and human service cuts please call Russell Frandsen of the Legislative Fiscal Analysts Office at (801) 538-1034 to speak.

3. Underwriting Laws in Utah & Policy Recommendations that Support Health System Reform

The yearly increases in health insurance premiums are a growing concern for both employers and individuals. Yet there is little understanding around how or why insurance companies decide to increase premiums. In fact, most of these decisions are *not* arbitrary. Federal and state laws establish parameters around the premium rates that insurers can charge. Generally, federal laws are applied to large employers, while state laws govern the individual and small group market. As Utah embarks on health system reform, making changes to current individual and small group rating practices will be essential.

The draft *Insurance Market* bill of the Health System Reform Task Force made some movement to changing the way we manage risk as a state by including modified community rating in the new portal market. **This change should not only be supported but should be expanded to all markets.** To learn more about Utah's current rating practices and UHPP's policy recommendations on how the system can achieve greater efficiencies, reduced costs, increased quality and expanded access while continuing to support the private market [click here](#).

4. UHPP Health Action Center

Throughout the session, UHPP will be developing tools to help you in your advocacy efforts. For the best resources during the Legislative Session, make sure to regularly visit the [Action Center on our website](#). Here are a few highlights of what you will find there:

A. UHPP Health Bill Tracker

The team at UHPP will do our best to track many of the health-related bills this legislative session. Our Health Bill Tracker is a quick and easy, one-stop-shop to find out where bills stand. [Click here for week two's health bill tracker](#). We will update our bill tracker weekly, so be sure to check back often.

B. Legislator List

Check out our handy 2009 spreadsheet of legislators and their contact information. Use it to track your conversations with legislators, find out who sits on the committees that oversee health issues, or mail merge to contact legislators individually! [To download in Excel, click here](#).

C. Fact Sheets

UHPP is continually preparing materials to give you the latest information. You'll find one-page factsheets to help you with your advocacy, as well as in-depth issue briefings to give you a thorough explanation of the issues. [Check here for our latest publications](#).

D. Advocacy Tool Kit

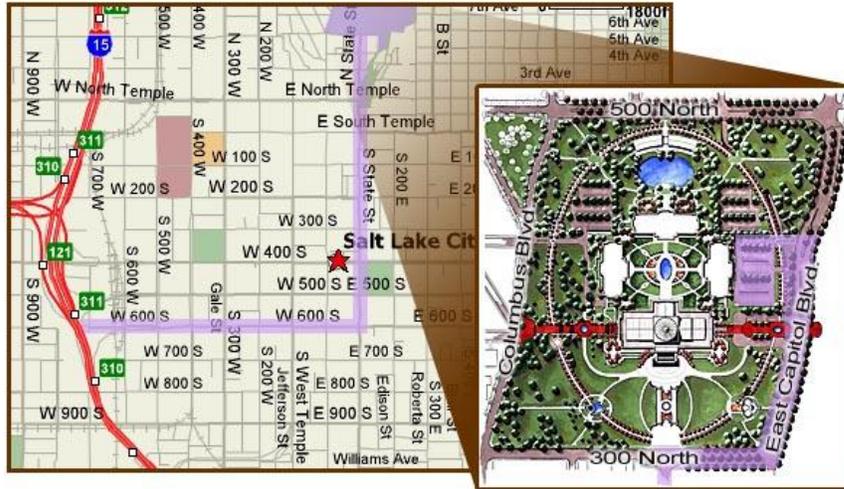
The State Capitol has also been named the People's House. So, to live up to its name, Utahns must feel welcome in their house. If you want to get more involved, but are new to Capitol Hill, we have gathered all the tools you need to learn the basics of citizen advocacy. [Check out our Advocacy Tool kit](#).

5. Tips and tools to make the best of the '09 Legislative Session

A. Getting to the State Capitol

If you are downtown, the UTA bus is a great option to get up to the Hill. Route 500 will take you right to the East Building's front door! The Capitol is in the Downtown Free Zone (!) and buses run every 15 minutes. [Click here for the schedule to the Capitol](#). [Click here for the route map](#). [Click here to plan your trip through UTA](#).

Driving from outside of Salt Lake: If coming from northbound I-15, take the 600 South exit, or if coming southbound, take the 400 S exit. Head east to State Street. Turn left on State Street and head up the hill to the State Capitol. See map below. Be sure to allow plenty of time to drive from the freeway through the city.



Where to park?

Two parking lots are available to the public. The largest is on the NE Corner of the Capitol Complex. The second lot is right next to East Building (Also known as the Senate Building). There is also plenty of street parking on the east side of the Capitol. If parking in the neighborhoods to the west, make sure to check the signs for parking time limits. If you must drive, your best bet is to carpool and arrive early (and often!).

B. Overview of key issues for the 2009 Legislative Session

No matter what issues you care about, it's always helpful to know what key general issues the legislators will be considering this Legislative Session. The Office of Legislative Research and General Council has summarized from Interim Committee discussions over the year in 3 pages. [Click here for the report](#)

6. Register NOW for UHPP's 1st Annual Health Policy Conference...

Health System Reform: The Key to Economic Recovery

February 3, 2008

9:00 am to 2:30 pm

State Office Building Auditorium, Utah State Capitol Complex, Salt Lake City, Utah

Space is limited/1st come, 1st served! To register, click [here](#) (use the automatic email provided including the subject line).

IMPORTANT: Please provide your 1st & last name, complete address with zip code, email address, and phone number in the body of your automatic email registration.

Even in these difficult economic times, we are confident about the prospects for health system reform at the national and state level. Why? Because health care is the key to economic recovery. Reforms that expand access, contain costs, and improve the quality of care will result in a more efficient and responsive health care system for all.

National health reforms will focus on two fronts: the private market and Medicaid/CHIP. Keynote speaker [John Holahan](#) of the Urban Institute is known for his expertise in *both* areas: he is at the center of emerging efforts to reform health care at the national level and has studied how to make our public programs more efficient and cost-effective as a part of overall reform. He will bring

expertise and inspiration to the growing community of Utahns who are ready for bold health system reforms that meet the needs of all Utahns, starting with the most vulnerable among us.

Change is coming for the *entire health care system!* Find out what these changes mean for Utah and our prospects for economic recovery!

Program

9:00 am	Registration and Breakfast
9:30 am	State Reform Lessons from Massachusetts (Brian Rosman, Research Director at MA's Health Care for All, one of the leaders in MA-based reforms)
10:40 am	Break
10:45	<u>Breakout Sessions</u> Where Utah stands on: Medicaid/CHIP (<i>Keynote speaker Holahan will be on hand to advise</i>) Private Insurance Market Reforms (<i>Health Care for All MA will be on hand</i>)
11:55 am	Break
12:00 pm	Lunch/Keynote Speaker/Q & A: John Holahan, Ph. D., The Urban Institute Health System Reform on the National Front: What's in it for Utah?
1:30 pm	Advocacy Training (<i>optional</i>)

Cost

There is no cost to attend. HOWEVER, we are asking for a \$15-100 sliding scale contribution to offset the costs of lunch, travel for presenters, honoraria, etc.



John F. Holahan, Ph.D. is Director of the Health Policy Research Center at The Urban Institute. Much of his research has focused on state health policy, including Medicaid and issues of federalism and health. These include analyses of the recent growth in Medicaid expenditures and the implications of block grants and changes in matching formulas on states. He has also published on strategies for Medicaid reform. He has developed proposals for health system reform, most recently in Massachusetts. He has also published research on the reasons for the growth in the uninsured over the past decade and on the effects of proposals to expand coverage on the number of uninsured and the cost to federal and state governments.