



Legislative Update

James Cavanagh, JD
MRS Lobbyist

OVERVIEW

The Legislature officially began this session on January 10 but as of this week there have been only 4 days where both Houses were in session. This is due in large measure to the fact that the House of Representatives currently has a 54-54 partisan deadlock. The deadlock is due to the fact that 2 Democrats won election for local office creating the vacancies. The Governor called a special election to fill the seats which are statistically Democratic strongholds. The primary election was held on January 30 and the special general election is scheduled for April 16. Meantime, don't expect much in the way of substantive policy from the House at least.

On January 24, Governor Whitmer gave her State of the State Address to a Joint Session of the Legislature. The Governor submitted her policy priorities which included a financial commitment for covered Pre-K to Post-Secondary education and continued infrastructure repair. On February 7 the Governor released her 2024-25 Executive Budget recommendations. The Legislature will consider her recommendations with a view forward finalizing a budget which would start in October, by the Fourth of July.

On February 27, Michigan will hold its Presidential Primary. Delegates to the Democratic National Convention will be allocated according to the results. The Republican delegates on the other hand, will be allocated by both the results of the Presidential Primary and the subsequent Party Caucus.

Michigan's Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission is back at work after a 3 judge federal district court opined that district lines violated the equal fraction clause of the 4th Amendment. Members of the Commission were ordered late last year by the Court to redraw seven State House Districts. What new district configurations the Court ultimately approves could have a direct impact over which political party controls the House in 2025.

LEGISLATION

Scope of Practice:

Last April, Senator Jeff Irwin (D-Ann Arbor) introduced SB 279, which is a reintroduction of last session's SB 680. The bill has bipartisan co-sponsorship and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Health Policy. This legislation, in essence, allows nurse practitioners to practice medicine by granting them authority to diagnose and prescribe controlled substances without being under the supervision of a physician. It also specifically allows nurse practitioners to engage in "ordering, performing, supervising and interpreting laboratory and imaging studies."

Physician groups are adamantly opposed to this legislation and are actively lobbying against it. The MRS Legislative Committee has been fully engaged and with the help of an ACR grant will make an aggressive public relations effort to approve the legislation. MRS, along with other physicians, specialty organizations and MSMS, will be waging a very vigorous, grassroots campaign in opposition. In fact, SB 279 has been the focal point of the MRS Legislative Day. Due to the effort of MRS, MSMS and other physician groups thus far, the bill has been stalled. Special thanks to Dr. Leah Davis for all of the efforts.

Physician-Led Patient Care Teams:

Rep. Alabas Farhat (D-Dearborn) has introduced HB 4472, which would establish and mandate practice agreements for physician assistants and nurse practitioners. The agreements call for a patient care team led by a physician or physicians. The legislation was introduced at the request of Michigan State Medical Society and is supported by physician specialty groups. It is now with the House Committee on Health Policy. The introduction of this bill was a counter-offensive by MSMS and physician groups to the nurses' efforts to legislate a medical degree. This bill is also being given a lot of attention from physician groups__

HB 4071, Oral Chemo Therapy:

Rep. Samantha Steckloff (D-Northville) sponsored a bill that requires equal insurance coverage for oral cancer chemotherapy and intravenous therapy. This bill passed both Houses, was signed by the Governor and is now Public Act 170 of 2023.

HB 4015, Insulin Co-Pay:

Sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Conlin (D-Dexter), places a limit on the co-pay of Insulin at \$35 for every 30-day supply. This bill remains with the House Insurance and Financial Services Committee.

HB 4276, Pharmacy Benefit Manager Regulation:

Rep. Farhat's legislation calls for strict regulation and reporting requirements for pharmacy benefit managers. The bill passed both Houses and was signed by the Governor late last year. It is now Public Act 279 of 2023.

SB 27, Mental Health Parity:

Sponsored by Sen. Sarah Anthony (D-Lansing), requires health insurers to give equal coverage for behavioral health and substance use disorder services as that given for physical health. Much of this is a codification of federal law; nevertheless, I do expect it to pass. The bill has passed the Senate by a vote of 35-3 and has been referred to the House Committee on Insurance and Financial Services.

Radiation Technology Rules:

The Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (DLEO) is promulgating administrative rules that will establish education and training requirements for operators of ionizing equipment. A public hearing was held on August 16 with MRS former President Ralph Lieto testifying along with members of the Society of Nuclear Medicine, Molecular Imaging and the American Society of Radiologic Technologists. As I reported in November, the Department will go ahead with the Rules, but exclude nuclear medicine because it believes it has no jurisdiction to regulate nuclear medicine. The Rules are now before the Legislature's Joint Committee on Administrative Rules.

MRS Public Relations Task Force:

As part of the MRS Legislative effort, a public relations firm has been engaged to keep educate legislations and the public in general, about the practice of radiology and the need to have qualified people interpret images. Market Resource Group (MRG) will be developing effective messaging and government efforts to inform decision makers about the perils of SB 279, the need for HB 4472 and what it takes to become a radiologist. To combine and expedite this effort a Working Group has been appointed to work with MRG and act as liaison for the Board of Trustees. Group members include Legislative Committee Chairs Doctors Joe Janewich and Leah Davis, Dr. Rocky Saenz, Dr. Michael Hicks, Dr. Sonia Somant, and MRS lobbyist Jim Cavanagh. Also, special thanks to President Walter Schijdak for his efforts with this project.