



Legislative Update

James Cavanagh, JD
MRS Lobbyist

OVERVIEW

The Legislature began its Spring Break on March 21 and is scheduled to return on April 9. Prior to recessing for its break, the Senate Health Policy Committee held a hearing on SB 279, the bill that expands the scope of practice for nurse practitioners. The House of Representatives is currently deadlocked between Republicans and Democrats at 54-54. A special election which was called by the Governor to fill 2 vacancies will be held on April 16. Most pundits expect the Democrats to win both seats and will once again hold an outright majority for the rest of the year. A 3 judge federal district court panel had ruled House district lines in and around the City of Detroit were unconstitutional, resulting in an underrepresentation of African Americans. A new map was submitted to the Court by the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission and those district lines met with the Court's approval. The newly created districts should not drastically alter the current composition of the House of Representatives.

Michigan held its Presidential Primary on February 27 with President Joe Biden for the Democrats and former President Donald Trump for the Republicans, the clear winners. Both men are now the presumptive nominees of their parties. The outcome of the US Senate race could determine the partisan makeup of that body. Current US Senator Debbie Stabenow is not seeking reelection. Leading candidates on the Republican side for the open seat are former Congressman and former CNN analyst Mike Rogers, former Congressman Peter Meijer, former Congressman Justin Amash, and Grosse Pointe businessman Sandy Pressler. At this point it appears Rogers has the most money considerable local backing and the endorsement of Donald Trump. For the Democrats, the clear leader is Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin who has the most endorsements and a considerable amount of money in the bank. Her closest rival is former actor and activist Hill Harper. At this stage, Slotkin appears to be the overwhelming favorite. The issue of who is in control of the Michigan Republican Party appears to be settled. A Kent County Circuit Court issued a declaratory ruling in favor of the insurgents who ousted former Chair Kristina Karamo

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 has been making an aggressive public relations effort to oppose the legislation. MRS, along with other physician, specialty organizations and MSMS, are waging a very vigorous, grassroots campaign in opposition.

On March 20, the Senate Health Policy Committee took testimony on the bill. Of course the Nurses Association testified in support as did the Dean of the Michigan State School of Nursing, the Team Wellness Center, the Detroit Wayne County Health Authority, AARP, Families Against Narcotics and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners. Testifying in opposition were Dr. Kate Rettinger for MSMS who is an emergency room physician and a professor at the Western Michigan University Medical School, Dr. Nicolas Fletcher, professor of psychiatry at the MSU Medical School, Dr. Emily Hunt representing the Michigan Association of Osteopathic Physicians, a representative from the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians, and Dr. Leah Davis representing the Michigan Radiological Society. Dr. Davis exposed the legislation for what it is, that being, a clear expansion of the nurse practitioner scope of practice. It appears the hearing was given to the nurses in an attempt to show them how much and how intense the opposition is. With the help of Dr. Davis' testimony and those who testified in opposition, Committee members were made aware of the depth of concern about the legislation. Thank you Dr. Davis. In addition to testimony, 39 other groups including the Michigan Society of Radiologic Technologists submitted cards in opposition that are part of the record. We will continue to stay vigilant.

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.

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.

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) has promulgated administrative rules that establish education and training requirements for operators of ionizing equipment. The Rules took effect March 13, 2024. 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 went ahead with the Rules, but excluded nuclear medicine because it believes it has no jurisdiction to regulate nuclear medicine.

MRS Public Relations Task Force:

As part of the MRS Legislative effort, a public relations firm has been engaged to keep educating legislators and the public in general, about the practice of radiology and the need to have qualified people interpret images. Market Resource Group (MRG) has developed effective messaging 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 Junewick and Leah Davis, Dr. Rocky Saenz, Dr. Michael Hicks, Dr. Sonia Somant, and MRS lobbyist Jim Cavanagh. Also, special thanks to President Walter Sahijdak for his efforts with this project. Use of the messaging developed by MRG with the help of the Working Group was instrumental toward gearing up opposition to SB 279 among MRS members.

ACR CAPITOL HILL DAY

My office is scheduling appointments for MRS members with Congressional offices as part of the ACR's Capitol Hill Day scheduled for April 17. I will notify you of the appointments and provide condensed talking points for your use. Thanks to all who are participating.