

MEMORANDUM

To: MRS Board of Trustees and Shannon Sage

From: Jim Cavanagh

January 16, 2025

RE: Legislative Report

OVERVIEW

The 103rd Michigan Legislature began its session at Noon on January 8 (the second Wednesday in January), as required by the State Constitution. The Republicans now hold a 58-52 majority in the House. Rep. Matt Hall (R-Kalamazoo) was elected Speaker of the House. Other members of the Majority Leadership Team include Rachelle Smit (R-Shelbyville), Speaker Pro Tempore Bryan Posthumus (R-Rockford), Majority Floor Leader and Chair of Appropriations Ann Bollin (R-Brighton).

The new leadership gives every indication that it will be a watch-dog over the Executive Branch of government which is still controlled by Democrats. The Speaker named 6 Subcommittees of the Standing Oversight Committee to investigate all aspects of the Executive Branch. Immediate priorities for the new Legislature include achieving a compromise on the raising of the minimum wage set to take effect in February, and methods to achieve adequate road funding. The odds-on favorite to become the next Chair of the Health Policy Committee is Rep. Curt Vanderwall (R- Ludington). In the past the Representative has been an advocate of greater access to health care which includes allowing health care professionals who are not physicians to engage in certain aspects of the practice of medicine.

Contrary to the orderly start of this Legislative session, last year's "lame duck" session was chaotic and in the end the House being unable to achieve a quorum had to adjourn. A wide variety of bills died due to the inability of the House to conduct business fueled mostly by the boycott of all 54 Republicans and 1 Democrat. Fortunately, among the bills that died were those increasing the caps for non-economic damages in medical malpractice cases, those allowing for the award of future wage earning capacity in wrongful death actions and measures drastically expanding the scope of practice for nurse practitioners to include the practice of medicine.

LEGISLATION

MED-MAL DIES:

Two House Bills HBs 6085 and 6086 and their Senate counter parts SBs 1158 and 1159 died in the last session. These measures more than doubled the amount of non-economic damages a plaintiff could collect in medical malpractice actions and allowed a claimant to be awarded damages for lost wage earnings in wrongful death actions. The House bills made it out of Committee to the Floor of the House, but died there. The Senate bills never made it out of Committee. MRS was part of a coalition of physician groups that actively opposed this legislation through direct and electronic contact with legislators. Many thanks to the MRS members who contacted their legislators. It made a difference!

NURSE PRACTITIONER SCOPE OF PRACTICE EXPANSION DIES:

As was the case with the medical malpractice legislation, the nurse practitioner scope of practice expansion died. This was due in large measure to the opposition registered by physicians and notably radiologists. Late last spring Dr. Leah Davis effectively testified before the Senate Health Policy Committee as to why the bill would allow nurses to practice medicine. It was compelling and effective. Thanks to Dr. Davis, the MRS leadership and the members who contacted legislators. We won the day!

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE:

MRS had a very active and successful Legislative session. Yet, in this season I anticipate another attempt by the nurses to practice medicine. In addition an attempt will be made to codify holistic medicine as an acceptable science. Finally, MRS will proactively pursue mandatory insurance coverage for breast imaging and a re-introduction of the physician led “patient team” legislation.

I will advocate for at least one and possibly two “Legislative Days” in 2025. I also believe MRS can team with MSMS and other physician groups to make their “Lobby Days” more effective. I can honestly tell you that MRS is a force in Lansing. Thanks for all your help.