
ASPA BUZZ

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ASPA Luncheon

Friday, March 7, 2008
12:00 Noon

Auditorium of the State Office Building
(north of the State Capitol Building)

Legislative Wrap-Up

Come join us and learn what happened during the 2008
legislative session . . . and why!

Please make your reservations early. The luncheon will be catered. Reservations or cancellations must be received no later than **Tuesday, March 4th**. No shows will be billed. Limited parking is available—please carpool or ride public transportation where possible.

The cost of the luncheon is \$12.00 for ASPA members, \$15.00 for nonmembers and \$6.00 for students. Cash or checks accepted.

Please call the Center for Public Policy and Administration, University of Utah, at 581-6493 or e-mail jrandall@cpga.utah.edu for reservations.

A Challenge for Utah's Public Servants

In his remarks at the February monthly luncheon of the Utah Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), **Dr. Harvey L. White**, president of ASPA, challenged us to believe in the important work we do as public servants. To be the most effective we can be, it is critical that we:

- believe in ourselves and that we can make a difference in our communities;
- believe in and encourage our colleagues to make a difference;
- support the local ASPA chapter and the national ASPA organization; and
- finally, believe in America!

Dr. White is an Associate Professor at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs.

FEBRUARY LUNCHEON

By Sara McCormick
Center for Public Policy & Administration, University of Utah

Revamping the Health Care System – A Daunting Task

A daunting task was John T. Nielsen's apt description of revamping Utah's health care system. Nielsen, who is serving as the Governor's Special Advisor on Health Care, has a unique perspective on the issue after 19 years in public service followed by 15 years as the Director of Government Relations for Intermountain Health Care (IHC). Nielsen has worked closely with Representative David Clark and others on developing and promoting legislation that will lay a foundation for this task.

The existing health care system has severe problems – it is too expensive and people do not get the care they need. The problems include: increasing costs, mandates for coverage, small employers unable to afford premiums, uninsured individuals increasing overall costs, employers cutting insurance, and high premiums for consumers and employers.

Utah has a unique opportunity to take actions to improve the health care system. Governor Huntsman is behind health insurance reform and addressed it in his State of the State speech. He is not alone in his concern. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Michael Leavitt, challenged Utah's legislative leadership to tackle Utah's health care system before it breaks. To support this challenge, he has provided the expertise of his best health care advisors. The United Way's Financial Stability Council formed a Health Care Working Group which formulated ideas on how to change the way the health care system operates. Based on the input from multiple sources, strategies have been developed. These are just a few of the players.

Nielsen believes a key piece that must occur is philosophical change in our health care system. Individual's attitudes towards health care need to shift and the system needs to support this. Market solutions must be instituted so that individuals have control over their health care. If individuals have more choices in their health care they will feel more responsible for making good economic decisions that meet their needs.

Representative Clark outlined six steps that could dramatically change Utah's health care system. Changes of this magnitude take time and careful planning. They also take bold action and innovation. If these six steps are pursued, hopefully in 10 years Utah's health care system will be where we want it to be. The steps are:

Provide consumers with cost and quality information – if individuals have access to information that allows them to research what their health care options are and what the cost is, they might choose lower cost options.

Establish best practices and standardize them – Best practices can be developed and standardized. If doctors follow the best practices they could then be given a layer of insulation from tort claims. At present, approximately 40% of procedures doctors perform are not critical

for the outcome of health care. These are diagnostic procedures that are performed to rule out diagnoses so the doctor will not be sued. Another factor that may influence a decision to conduct a procedure is the doctor owning the piece of equipment.

An example of this is in the Seattle and Tacoma area. The Puget Sound Health Care Alliance consists of 18 major employers who have banded together and aggregated health care data and compared outcomes. The data allows them to provide information on where the best health outcomes for a procedure are found. For example, the best outcome for shoulder surgery is from this hospital. Other hospitals will work to improve their services so they will be more competitive.

Promote healthy behavior – Encourage everyone to be healthier. In Switzerland, individuals purchase health care for five years and premiums can be \$10,000 per year. If people take care of themselves and improve their health outcomes, they can get a rebate of up to 50% of the premiums. This is a real incentive for individuals to improve their health.

Utah schools require a half a credit of financial education for children to graduate from high school. Emphasis on physical education would be valuable as well. Developing healthy behaviors in children will be beneficial in the long run.

Enroll uninsured in programs for which they are eligible – The best estimate is that 306,000 lives are not insured in Utah. More than half that number of uninsured is eligible for public programs including CHIP, Medicaid, and Utah Premium Partnership but they have not enrolled. If children do not receive the vaccines or other necessary care now, their health care costs will be higher in the future. At present, 17 cents of every dollar we pay on premiums goes to pay for the uninsured. If more individuals were covered, this amount would be reduced.

Keep people engaged in the discussion of health system solutions – People are interested in health system reform now. We need to keep people interested in the issue and in supporting change. One way is to encourage employers to set up programs that allow employees to pay for health care with tax free dollars or provide a tax credit for people whose employers do not offer these programs.

Task Force – Legislators felt that these changes are “policy making” decisions and, therefore, should be controlled by the legislature. The task force that is established needs to be nimble and move quickly.

Nielsen also reiterated that we need to move to increased accountability and market solutions. The proposed health care bill outlines a three year plan on what needs to be accomplished. Nielsen then outlined the legislation (HB 133 and its substitute) proposed by Representative Clark.

- Appropriate funds to create greater transparency. Last year a bill passed that would increase the transparency for consumers. It would develop a system that would enable consumers to understand what they are paying for and what services actually cost.
- Create standards for electronic exchange of clinical health care information.

- Provide enough money so the committee can hire appropriate experts to study and provide input on proposed changes.
- Establish tax credits that will provide tax relief to assist with paying for insurance premiums.
- Standardize insurance application forms so individuals do not have to complete multiple forms for different insurance companies.
- Work with the Utah Premium Partnership to increase subsidy for working individuals so they can pay for health insurance premiums in the private market.
- Authorize the State to seek amendments and waivers to Medicaid with the goal to push as many people as possible into private insurance companies.
- Authorize Utah Department of Health to coordinate outreach efforts to increase enrollment in CHIP and UPP. This can be used to substantially decrease the number of uninsured.
- Create an Office of Consumer Services that will coordinate efforts of executive branch offices that need to be involved to create meaningful health system reform.
- Create a one-year task force to deal with a variety of issues that would need to be addressed.

Clark noted that HB 133 contains no mandates. The current health system has mandates that force insurers to offer same minimum coverage to all. This is not logical – a young snowboarder has dramatically different needs than a young, single mom.

Another factor that impacts the system is that for most employers, health care is a defined benefit plan similar to how pension plans used to be designed. The employer decides what the benefit is. Nielsen believes that we need to move health care to a defined contribution plan – employers contribute a set amount and employees use the contribution to shop for the program that best fits their needs. This also results in individuals no longer being stuck in jobs due to health care coverage. Instead, they would have more flexibility because they can take their health care with them if they change jobs.

As Representative Clark stated, “Meaningful health system reform requires the best thinking, as well as the good will, of all Utahns. We have a golden opportunity to move away from a “one-size fits all” approach mandated by the federal government. We need a fiscally conservative approach that reaps the benefits of the private market, encourages personal responsibility and maximizes consumer choice through good information.”

Tentative Schedule of ASPA Luncheon Topics for 2008

April 4	Transportation
May 2	ASPA Awards/Public Service Recognition Week (see nomination forms included in this newsletter)

COUNCIL CORNER

Matt Dumont
Salt Lake County
ASPA Council Member

Transitioning Back into the Community

According to the Re-Entry Policy Council, in 2004 over seven million individuals were released from jail and 650,000 were released from prisons across the United States. Corrections expenditures have increased from \$9 billion in 1982 to \$60 billion in 2002. Approximately two-thirds of the people released from prisons are re-arrested within three years of their release.

Half of those leaving jail earned less than \$600 per month prior to their incarceration. The earning potential and employment prospects of re-entering offenders are further hindered by the existence of a criminal record. Many released offenders have substantial mental illness, most have substance abuse problems and over half have children under 18. Needless to say, these folks have some problems.

The Re-Entry Policy Council was established by the Council of State Governments. The Council's purpose is to provide policymakers and practitioners with information and resources to improve the chances of adults being released from prisons or jails. The Council is made up of:

- state legislators;
- criminal justice policymakers and practitioners;
- workforce development and employment services officials;
- housing providers and officials;
- health, mental health, and substance abuse treatment representatives;
- victim advocates;
- people who have been incarcerated and their families; and
- representatives from faith-based groups.

The Salt Lake County Metro Jail has adopted many of the recommendations of the Re-Entry Policy Council. Partnerships have been developed with many community organizations and businesses that can provide the services, resources, and employment necessary for re-entry to successfully occur. Before being released, prisoners have access to quality substance abuse, mental health, adult education, English as a second language, and re-integration programs. These programs are all linked to resources in the community that are accessible to offenders following release.

Vocational programs are also available to assist in re-entry. Prisoners selected for the gardening program may receive a "Utah Master Gardener Certificate" from Utah State University Extension Services, providing them with a marketable skill and work experience. Participating prisoners earn the certificate by completing 40 hours of class work and working in the two acre garden located on the jail property. Prisoners may qualify to participate in the jail's vocational

ANNOUNCING THE ASPA ANNUAL SERVICE AWARDS

ASPA SERVICE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

I would like to nominate the following individual, board, or commission for an ASPA service award.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____
City State Zip Code

Name of Nominator: _____ Phone Number: _____

The award I think the individual, board, or commission would be eligible for is the:

- Senator Arthur V. Watkins Distinguished Service Award for an Elected Official, which honors elected officials who, through exceptional commitment, skill and integrity, served the public with special distinction.
- Dr. G. Homer Durham Distinguished Service Award for an Appointed Official, which honors appointed officials who have served the public with honor and integrity.
- Dr. F. Ted Hebert Distinguished Service Award for Outstanding Contributions to Public Administration, which honors individuals that have made significant contributions to public administration through academia or as a public citizen.
- Boards and Commissions Award of Excellence, for a board or commission whose members have exhibited community service, work to support the common good, are proactive in decision-making, and facilitate public participation in governmental processes.

Reason for nominating this person or organization:

Nominations should be sent to:

Utah Chapter ASPA
University of Utah
260 S Central Campus Dr Rm 214
Salt Lake City, UT 84112-9154
Fax: 801-585-5489