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NCOIL MOVES TOWARD BEST PRACTICES FOR CURBING OPIOID ABUSE

Troy, New York, March 18, 2013—Spurred to action by the escalating costs of opioid abuse, lawmakers at the NCOIL Spring Meeting agreed to develop best practices that would offer a multifaceted strategy for states debating possible reforms. The decision to move forward with guidelines as opposed to model legislation followed discussion at a special NCOIL session in Washington, DC.

The March 8 event was held jointly by the Workers' Compensation Insurance and Health, LTC & Health Retirement Issues Committees, in recognition that opioid abuse affects both lines of insurance.

According to Rep. Bill Botzow (VT), chair of the Workers' Comp Committee and moderator of the event, "Opioid abuse is a growing epidemic that reaches across state lines and may be impossible to address with any single approach. Because states are in different places in their efforts to address opioid abuse, the appropriate role for NCOIL is to lay out guidelines for states to consider as they develop their state-specific reforms."

Sen. Jake Corman (PA), chair of the Health, LTC & Health Retirement Issues Committee, noted that "In listening to experts discuss state approaches, including experiences in Kentucky, it became clear that any NCOIL effort must take into account the findings and opinions of a range of interested parties, and so NCOIL work going forward will not take place in a vacuum."

Based on legislative discussion at the special meeting, the proposed best practices are likely to address drug monitoring program reforms, funding, prescribing practices, and data sharing, among other things. Lawmakers will consider the draft guidelines at the July 11 through 14 Summer Meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Participating in the March 8 special session were Sherry Green, Executive Director of the National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (NAMSDL), who overviewed state reform approaches; Van Ingram, Executive Director of the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy, who spoke to Kentucky's HB 1 reform law; and Patrice Harris, MD, speaking on behalf of the AMA, who offered a provider perspective on what state initiatives should and should not include.

NCOIL is an organization of state legislators whose main area of public policy interest is insurance legislation and regulation. Most legislators active in NCOIL either chair or are members of the committees responsible for insurance legislation in their respective state houses across the country. More information is available at www.ncoil.org.

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