



PRESIDENT: REP. FRANK WALD, ND
VICE PRESIDENT: SEN. ALAN SANBORN, MI
SECRETARY: REP. BRIAN KENNEDY, RI
TREASURER: SEN. JAMES SEWARD, NY
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR: REP. ROBERT DAMRON, KY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Susan Nolan
Mike Humphreys
NCOIL National Office
518-687-0178

NCOIL CONTINUES HEALTH REFORM EFFORTS, HIGHLIGHTS MASSACHUSETTS PLAN

Troy, New York, July 3, 2006 – With an eye towards finding state solutions for struggling health insurance markets across the country, the Health, Long-Term Care, and Health Retirement Issues Committee of the National Conference of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL) will hear first-hand of Massachusetts' new, ground-breaking healthcare system on Friday, July 21, during the July 20 through 23 NCOIL Summer Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. The Committee will convene from 8:00 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.

Massachusetts State Representative Peter Koutoujian, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health, will address NCOIL and provide insight into the process by which compromise on the legislation was reached, as well as detail provisions of the plan.

According to Rep. George Keiser (ND), chair of the NCOIL Committee, "Rep. Koutoujian's remarks on recent Massachusetts reforms will be an important part of our discussions regarding state-regulated health insurance. Although the plan may not be suitable for all states, it includes thought-provoking ideas worthy of further investigation. Healthcare reform is an issue of great significance and unless we act to make coverage more accessible and affordable in our individual states, Congress will enact a one-size-fits-all approach that satisfies few."

The Massachusetts legislation was passed in April after Republican Governor Mitt Romney and the Democratic state legislature reached a compromise on the scope of the bill. Parties involved have hailed the plan as a success, and large insurers have pledged cooperation in implementing the statute.

Among other things, the plan requires that all individuals in the state obtain health insurance coverage by July 1, 2007, if such coverage is considered affordable. The first-year penalty for those without insurance would be a loss of the personal exemption for tax year 2007. Subsequent financial penalties equal to a portion of what an individual would have paid toward an affordable premium will be administered if an individual remains uninsured.

The plan also creates the Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector to review and certify good-value health products. The Connector would serve as a clearinghouse for individuals and employers to purchase policies with pre-tax dollars. Partially subsidized health plans will be available to low-income individuals, and employers will be strongly encouraged to participate in employee healthcare under the landmark plan.

The Committee discussion will further NCOIL's examination of state reform efforts, and will precede a general session on the cost of state healthcare benefit mandates, scheduled for 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 22.

General Session speakers include Kevin Corcoran of the American Chiropractic Association, Mila Kofman of the Health Policy Institute at Georgetown University, Rich Marlin of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, Marty Mitchell of America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP), and Geoff O'Hara of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. NCOIL lawmaker Rep. Susan Westrom (KY) will moderate the discussion.

The NCOIL Summer Meeting will be held at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel and Towers in Boston, Massachusetts.

NCOIL is an organization of state legislators whose primary focus is insurance legislation and regulation. Many 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.

For further details, please contact the NCOIL National Office at 518-687-0178 or at mhumphreys@ncoil.org.

#