



Tidbits from Sacramento

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January 24, 2008 – Issue # 19

HEALTHCARE REFORM HEARING – NO VOTE TAKEN YESTERDAY

The 11 hour Senate Health Committee Hearing yesterday was incredible in term of its organization, its content and the attention paid to this hearing by committee members and the hundreds of those either testifying or assisting in this endeavor. There were no breaks, not for lunch nor dinner. Food was brought in for the Committee, but it was listen and eat and listen members did!

Senator Kuehl, Chair of the committee, ran the hearing in a manner that I have not seen in some time. She broke the over 200 page legislation into 10 parts and each part was addressed separately. Those testifying, and there were numbers of them, were only to testify on the specific issue under discussion at that time. They were then called up pursuant to the position they were taking on that issue (support, support if amended, oppose, oppose unless amended, etc.).

While this necessitated some people coming to the witness table many times, it allowed the focus to be on the specific issue at hand. I believe that this structure allowed everyone to fully understand the ramifications of each component, whether they agreed or not. It was fully dissected by the proponents and opponents. Nearly all members of this 11 member committee were attentive throughout this marathon hearing and asked numerous questions of the witnesses. The administration officials, the bill's authors and staff also responded to numerous questions throughout the entire hearing.

I suspect that members of the Committee learned more about this legislation than they had anticipated. Tough questions were asked by various members of the Committee.

The hearing opened with remarks by the Chair regarding the structure of the hearing. The bill was presented to the Committee by Speaker Nunez, as well as Kim Belshe, Secretary of Health & Human Services and Department of Finance Deputy Director, Tom Sheehy on behalf of the Administration. Senator Perata also made some introductory remarks.

The well respected non-partisan Legislative Analyst, Liz Hill and her staff made a very lengthy presentation to the Committee. She was requested by Senator Perata, President proTem of the Senate in December to analyze certain fiscal issues related to the health care reform legislation.

Her 27 page document was the focus of the hearing for well over an hour. I am sure this presentation was of great interest to the members of the Committee as well as interested parties on both sides of the issues.

At the close of the hearing, it was decided that the vote would not be taken at this time, but that the vote would take place on Monday, January 28. I expect every member of the Committee will be contacted by both the proponents and opponents of the measure for the next few days.

STAY TUNED – THIS ISSUE IS FAR FROM OVER