

## Legislative Report; Week of June 11, 2007

Discussions between the House and Senate budget conferees continued this week. However, the work of the General Assembly was overshadowed this week by the death of Senator Marc Basnight's wife, Sandy, on Sunday evening. Many members of the Legislature journeyed to Wanchese on Wednesday to attend Mrs. Basnight's funeral, and activity at the General Assembly was slow all week.

**H.B. 748 – Insurers/Cover Prescriptions in Emergencies** received a favorable report in Senate Commerce this week and passed the Senate this afternoon. It should be ratified and signed by the Governor shortly.

**H.B. 1531 – Clarify Small Business Health Insurance Credit** emerged from House Finance this week and thereafter passed the House. It will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**H.B. 265 – Establish High Risk Pool** has not yet been calendared for debate in Senate Commerce. However, I met this week with the Senate sponsor of this legislation, Senator Tony Rand (D-Fayetteville and Senate Majority Leader), to address the future handling of this legislation. Representatives of Blue Cross, the DOI, the MS Society, and the Health Access Coalition also attended this meeting, along with Representatives Hugh Holliman (D-Lexington and House Majority Leader) and Verla Insko (D-Chapel Hill). The concept at this point is for the premium to range from 150% to 200% of the standard rate (rather than 175% in the House bill). The expectation is that the pool's governing Board will set the premium at the lowest level possible. An appropriation of \$250,000 will be included in the budget to get the pool up and running, with federal seed money reimbursing the State for this expenditure. Senator Rand will confer with the Chairman of Senate Commerce, Senator R.C. Soles, about having this bill calendared for discussion in that committee. I will keep you advised as this bill begins to move in the Senate.

House and Senate budget conferees have their work cut out for them, but once the budget is concluded, there is a chance that the Legislature could adjourn. I will, therefore, keep you advised of all developments on the budget and related issues, and would welcome your thoughts and questions at any time.

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