

The pace of activity at the General Assembly is beginning to quicken. Committees have been meeting, and it is getting to be business as usual during the new session.

This week Senator A.B. Swindell (D-Nashville) hosted a meeting concerning STOLI. Those attending included Commissioner of Insurance Wayne Goodwin and his legislative counsel, Rose Williams. Also attending were members of the life settlement industry. I attended, as did two representatives of the American Council of Life Insurers. The ACLI and I will confer with Senator Tony Rand (D-Fayetteville) on Monday, February 23 about STOLI legislation, and I will keep you advised as we seek to promote the introduction of legislation will protect our interests.

Senate Commerce met this week and considered a bill which would ban the use of mobile phones while driving (**SB 12**). The bill was not voted upon, and its chances of passage out of committee are uncertain at this point.

SB 165 – State Review of Group Insurance Claims would give the Department of Insurance the authority to make rulings on the payment or denial of group health insurance claims. Representatives of the Department report that this bill was filed without their input, and they have indicated that their staff would have to be increased substantially to provide the services that the bill would require. Stay tuned as I learn more about this bill and its prospects.

This week saw the introduction of **HB 212 – Health Insurance Pilot Program**. This legislation is sponsored by the Asheville delegation, which includes Rep. Bruce Goforth, Chairman of House Insurance. It would provide for the creation of association health plans, and I will keep you advised as the bill is discussed and scheduled for debate in committee.

The economic uncertainties that face the Legislature will pose a challenge throughout the session. **SB 202** has been designated as this year's budget bill, and I will keep you advised as the budget process gets underway.

Please note that legislation designed to limit the length of sessions has already passed the Senate. **SB 15** would limit legislators' per diem to 135 days in long sessions and 60 days in short sessions. It passed the Senate by a vote of 37 to 11. It will now be sent to the House, which has been less welcoming to the concept of session limits.

On Tuesday, February 24, **HB 102 – Risk Pool Budget Correction** will come on for consideration in House Health. This legislation is technical in nature and would provide a budget coding amendment which would permit \$5 million in Health and Wellness Trust funds to be transferred to the Health Insurance Risk Pool.

Senate Commerce is scheduled to meet next week, but so far the only matter on its agenda is the confirmation of an appointee to the Utilities Commission. House Insurance is not yet scheduled to meet.

That should cover all of the bases for now, and I will stay in touch as matters of interest receive attention in the NC General Assembly.

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