

## **End of Session Recap**

Much of the 2018 session in Oklahoma focused on financial matters which was no surprise after the last few years of revenue shortfalls and decreased earnings.

Legislators wrapped up the 2018 session three weeks early after members passed a revenue package that included a \$1 increase to the cigarette tax amongst other revenue generator measures. Much of the revenue package went to fund education but in its second year, proceeds from the cigarette tax will be dedicated to a health care revolving fund.

## **Cigarette Tax**

The MS Society supported the attempts in the 2017 session for the \$1.50 cigarette tax and the \$1 cigarette tax this session because of the negative impact that smoking has for people living with MS. Compared to non-smokers, smokers are almost two times more likely to be diagnosed with MS and more likely to be diagnosed with progressive multiple sclerosis. Once diagnosed with MS, smokers may experience more severe symptoms, increased relapse frequency, and greater disability compared to non-smokers. An increase in the cost of cigarettes has been proven to reduce smoking, coupled with the chance to improve the health care system in the state are both good reasons to support this tax increase. The additional estimated revenue generated frees up other area of the budget, which has led to the Oklahoma Health Care Authority's contemplation of a 2 percent increase in provider rates with a final determination expected by July 1.

## **Work Requirements (SB2932)**

The issue that dominated most of our time at the capitol was work requirements for Medicaid coverage. The measures sought to instruct The Health Care Authority to seek a waiver from Centers For Medicare And Medicaid Services to implement the requirement. During the interim, a work group that included elected officials and staff from Governor Fallin's office studied the issue and the governor's office requested work requirement bills. Two measures, HB3556 and SB1179, did not pass. However, despite efforts from a coalition of health care lobbyists and patient advocate group, the legislature passed and Governor Fallin signed a third measure, HB2932. Health-minded legislators such as Sen. Yen, an anesthesiologist, and Rep. Derby, a doctor, as well as Sen. Griffin, who has worked extensively on mental health and child-related issues, spoke openly about the ineffectiveness of Medicaid work requirements.

The Health Care Authority is currently working on the waiver and could have it ready as soon as August or September. However, Seema Verma, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has cautioned non-Medicaid-expansion states about seeking waivers for Medicaid work requirements. Oklahoma has not expanded Medicaid, it is unclear at this time if the feds will approve. Here is the link to the versions of the work requirement bill (HB2932) that was enacted, bill history and summaries: <http://www.oklegislature.gov/BillInfo.aspx?Bill=HB2932&Session=1800>

## **Income Eligibility (SB1030)**

The health care coalition the MS Society is a part of was able to kill SB1030 in committee. This measure would have asked the state to seek a waiver from centers For Medicare And Medicaid Services to lower

the income level for eligibility for Medicaid to 20 percent of the federal poverty level. While this wasn't the biggest priority for the Society, we were part of the coalition that killed the measure.

### **Medical Marijuana**

In anticipation of a statewide medical marijuana vote, legislators introduced several pieces of legislation, but no measures passed. Several bills didn't move through the process, but two bills made it partway through the legislative process. HB3468 dealt more with the legal/regulatory aspects of medical marijuana. SB1120 specifically mentioned multiple sclerosis as one of the allowable uses of medical marijuana.

Residents will vote on State Question 788 on June 26 and it instructs the State Department of Health to start regulating the industry 30 days after passage. If the measure passes, a special session is expected to provide legislative direction for the regulatory structure possibly in July.