



**GAHU**

## **Under the Gold Dome Report**

**February 12, 2010**

CHANGE - a word that we've grown to hate. But, it's a word that's a regular part of our world. I always said that the reason I got into insurance is because it changes all of the time, and I would never be bored!

What's happened this week:

- I've met with the chairman of the Senate Insurance committee and the House Insurance Committee. Both gentlemen were very gracious with their time and comments. Our relationships are solid with John Meadows and Ralph Hudgens, both of whom expressed their desire to continue to work with us on insurance issues.
- The Senate Insurance Committee meeting was held on Tuesday
  - HB417, which establishes English as the primary language for contracts was passed out of committee.
  - SB 316, which allows the sale of Medicare supplement policies to Medicare beneficiaries under age 65 was also passed out of committee.
  - SB317 and SR794/795 were moved to rules. SB317 is a proposed law that provides that no law shall compel any person to participate in any health care system. SR 794 is a proposed constitutional amendment that also states that no law shall compel any person to participate in any health care system.
- Meanwhile, the budget takes front seat to any bill that has any kind of cost attached to it. With a \$1.5 billion shortage, the Governor is looking for ways to cut costs to stay in a balanced budget position. Even with that being said, it doesn't stop the introduction of bills that would mandate new coverage (autism), introduce cross-state selling, abolish the elected position of Commissioner of Insurance, as well as some technical clean-up bills for state continuation.
- Michael Wardrip, the long-time GAHU lobbyist, and I spent all day Tuesday together, meeting with other lobbyists and elected officials. Michael shared the "Georgia Individual High Risk Reinsurance Pool" bill proposed language with me before going to the Legislative Council with Sen. Judson Hill's blessing on Wednesday.

- I have also met with the lobbyists from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia, Kaiser, SIIA, The Independent Insurance Agents of Georgia (the Big I), Medical Association of Georgia, Georgia Hospital Association, American Insurance Association and a host of others. We will continue to build relationships with our coalition partners to make sure our Georgia consumers retain the right to choose – providers, insurance plans and agents!

What's up next week?

- A meeting with Dr. Meadows from DCH with Senator Hill and Jessica Waltman (NAHU) by phone to discuss SB 92.
- A meeting is scheduled with Senator Preston Smith to discuss his bills SB 330 and SB 331, both of which are now back in committee. We are going to offer our assistance to Senator Smith to understand how far the rings will emanate from the pebble thrown into the lake with his proposed legislation.
- An invitation has been received for a Senate Insurance Committee dinner, an annual affair given by lobbyists for the Senators sitting on that committee.
- I am also participating in a study group by the NAHU Leg Council regarding cross state selling. This is a topic that is popular with the talk shows. We are going to issue a white paper with the NAHU position.

If you are interested in coming downtown to work with me, please let me know – I would love to have your support! We don't face any immediate threats at the moment – but I will sound the trumpet and rally the troops if that happens!

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Wetherton