



GAHU

Under the Gold Dome Report

February 26, 2010

The General Assembly was in recess this week, working on trying to find more than a billion dollars to make up the budget shortfall.

What happened this week:

- The GAHU Legislative Council met on Tuesday – to review the various bills that have been introduced and come up with a position statement about them.

As you know, GAHU is made up of agents, consultants, insurance company representatives and other providers of services related to employee benefits. We are a diverse organization with one goal – TO PROTECT THE CONSUMER'S FUTURE. That future includes who provides their care, where they receive it and the right to purchase the financing mechanism (insurance) that best suits their needs from the insurance professional of their choice.

In that spirit, we review legislation and come up with a response that will stay true to our mission. Our Leg Council has come up with a new phrase that we will employ – “Yes – if”. We will support responsible legislation that will improve the consumer's future.

- Across State Line Selling – [Senate Bill 407](#) and [House Bill 1184](#) - These bills would like to promote competition in the individual market within our state by allowing companies to sell the products that have been filed and approved in other states. We can support this type of legislation, as long as they contain some additional reforms that include protections that would preserve the rich diversity in carriers that we currently enjoy. Some of these reforms include: streamlined approval process for new product implementation by domiciled carriers, a more competitive premium tax assessment, a level playing field for consumers and insurance carriers, consumer protection and tight reciprocity agreements.

- High Risk Reinsurance Risk Pool - [Senate Bill 453](#) – We have long been an ardent supporter of the formation of a source for individuals (who have a pre-existing condition that would prevent them from purchasing insurance in the standard market) to purchase insurance. We can support this bill if some of the following reforms could be included: eligibility, language that would prevent migration from the small group markets and individual markets into the pool, a review of the initial rating, retention threshold indexing, and claims management responsibilities.
- Multiple Employer Groups – Association Health Plans - [Senate Bill 408](#) and [Senator Bill 331](#) – traditionally these type plans fail because of the “death spiral” in the pools. We are studying these bills to see if there could be a way to support them with additional language that would protect against this eventuality.

And, the beat goes on! We will be downtown this week – meeting with legislators and lobbyists talking about these issues. What’s most alarming is that we are not talking about the underlying factor in the high cost of health insurance – and that is the cost of health care. We will make sure that our legislators hear that statement – repeated often enough, maybe some things will change.

If you are interested in coming downtown to work with me, please let me know – I would love to have your support!

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Wetherton