

Legislative Update
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Two Weeks Out

The legislature is just two weeks away from first adjournment on April 6th and Thursday marked the last day for non-exempt committees to meet for the session. That deadline meant that most committees spent the week finalizing hearings and moving bills out of committee for consideration on the floor.

Between now and adjournment, the House and Senate will spend much of their time on the floor or in conference committees. As bills pass from either chamber, they will move into conference committees to resolve difference between House and Senate positions. The conference committees are comprised of the chair, vice-chair and ranking minority leader from the appropriate committee in each chamber. As agreement is reached, conference committee reports are sent back to the full body for final votes.

Telemedicine Bill Gets Complicated

A bill that would provide insurance coverage parity between in-person medical visits and those provided via teleconference, [HB 2674](#)*, became suddenly more complex in Senate committee actions on Thursday.

The Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee met briefly at the rail outside of chambers to take action on the bill. That action included amending in a bill establishing dental therapists in Kansas and adding providers who would be covered under telemedicine.

The actions leading to the convergence of two substantial pieces of legislation was nearly inexplicable. The House Health and Human Services Committee had been scheduled on Thursday to take action on [SB 312](#), the Senate bill establishing dental therapist practice, but the chairman suddenly adjourned that meeting without taking action.

Occurring almost simultaneously, Senator Vicki Schmidt, chairperson of the Senate health committee, was denied the opportunity for her committee to meet the next Monday to take action on HB 2674. Upon learning of that and the House committee's refusal to take action on SB 312, she announced the meeting at the rail and the committee amended SB 312 into HB 2674.

While KAFP has had no interaction with SB 312, it has been strongly supportive of the bill establishing telemedicine as a reimbursable service in Kansas. Both bills have strong legislative support, but tying two unrelated and substantial bills together adds an extra layer of complexity and difficulty.

The committee also added more providers who would be covered under telemedicine, primarily those who deliver speech, physical therapy and occupational therapy services to schoolchildren who are Medicaid recipients.

The bill will likely be debated this next week and, once passed, will go to a health conference committee to iron out differences.

Fate of Tobacco Tax Bills Unclear

The House Taxation Committee and the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee have both held public hearings on [HB 2231](#) and [SB 376](#), respectively, and the road ahead for the two is murky at best. The identical bills have strong pockets of support, but also have strong opposition.

Proponents, including KAFP, emphasize the potential to cost smokers out of tobacco use, especially teens, who have less spending power, buy cigarettes by the pack and aren't likely to drive far to access them. Opponents, primarily convenience stores and tobacco shops, point to the potential impact on their businesses, especially in border counties. Some also find picking out a small population to particularly tax to be unfair.

Some key legislators have said its fate lies with the State Budget, particularly school finance, demands. That need, though, has decreased due to anticipated revenues related to changes in the federal tax code, which are thought to be in the neighborhood of \$150 million.

Because tax committees are exempt from legislative action deadlines, legislators can delay action on the bills – especially until they have a clear picture of the budget demands after budget bills, school finance legislation, and new April consensus revenue estimates are finalized.

Family Doctor of the Day

KAFP sponsors the Family Doctor of the Day (FDOD) program during the Kansas legislative session. Licensed physicians, including residents, volunteer to provide mostly-minor health needs to legislators and their staff. The Legislature highly values and appreciates access to these services, especially when so many are away from their hometown primary care physicians.

The following members provided services last week: **Mike Kennedy, MD**, Kansas City; **Allison Edwards, MD**, Kansas City; **Cynthia Scheibe, MD**, Topeka; **Melissa Rosso, MD**, Manhattan; and **Erin Locke, MD**, Holton. Thank you all for your time and service to Capitol legislators and staff last week.

*HB 2674 has not been updated on the legislative website, so the link is to the bill as it came out of House.