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In this Week's Issue:

Town Meetings

Wildlife Summit

Health Care Reform

Quick Links

[Idaho Legislature](#)

[Idaho Legislature Live](#)

[Eye on Boise - Hourly](#)

[Legislative Report](#)

Past Updates

Week One - 1/12/2012

Week Two - 1/20/2012

Legislative News - Week Four February 3, 2012

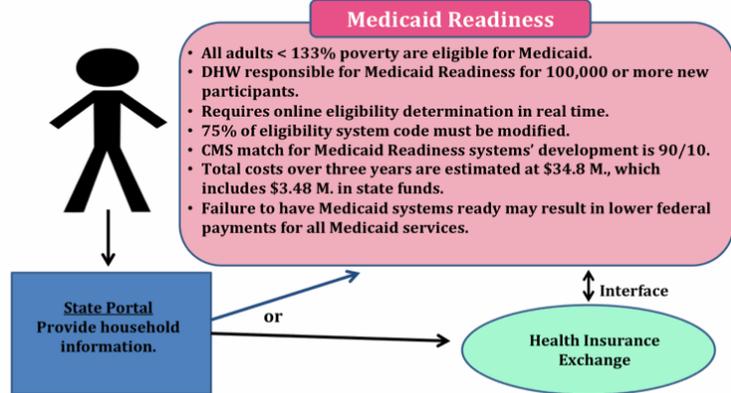
Town Meetings: Thanks to all of you who attended our town meetings. We enjoyed hearing your concerns and we're working on following up. Hopefully this will be a short session and we will be in your towns again in early April.

Fish and Game to hold Wildlife Summit: I want to commend the Fish and Game Commission/Department for moving ahead on a summit to get help on their future directions. Planned for late August in Boise, the meeting will be filmed with an opportunity for interaction from those of us unable to travel. The Department is working with the State Tourism Department to look for partnering and co-marketing opportunities

Health Care Reform: David K. Jones, MSPH, was an intern for our office a few years ago. His recent article in the New England Journal of Medicine outlined four key events in 2012 which may serve as the precursors for 2014 when the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, ACA, takes effect. The four are as follows:

1. States play a significant role in the ACA. They will be making decisions about high risk pools (we already have one), looking at rate increases for the commercial insurance market, establishing eligibility guidelines for Medicaid, creating what an essential health benefit package might look like, and creating a health insurance exchange where small business and individuals can compare and purchase plans. This last item, the health insurance exchange has created the most controversy. Below is a chart which depicts the interface between the health insurance exchange and the increased eligibility for Medicaid.

Medicaid Systems Must Be Operational by 2014



This week, Michael Leavitt, former Utah Governor and Former Secretary of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, spoke to legislators at the annual Chambers' luncheon. Governor Leavitt favors a state developed health insurance exchange in light of his suspicion surrounding federalism (based on his experience) and his support of the free market. He thinks we should do something rather than nothing which will allow Idaho to maintain local control and avoid federal intervention. As I have said we do not want the one-size-fits-all exchange run out of Washington. And he believes that market competition will bring down the prices of health care procedures. He used the example of shopping for a colostomy.

2. The Supreme Court ruling on the constitutionality of the ACA is expected in late June. It is probably risky to wait until the court rules and then scramble to catch up, and anyway, why wouldn't we want a health insurance exchange. Governor Leavitt said the idea is a blend of the Democrats' desire to fund health cooperatives and the Republican Think Tank Heritage Foundation proposal which came up with the market driven exchange idea.
3. June 29 is the deadline for applications for the final grant that states can access to support/create the state health exchange. Not accepting a grant to help us get started means that we will be stuck with the feds.
4. The November election is the fourth significant date. A lot can happen around the election, at the presidential level, at the congressional level and even at our legislative level. Waiting for the results of the elections can mean that Idaho will give the control to the federal government.

Plenty of food for thought as we move to the fifth week of the legislature. Please keep in touch. You can e mail me at wjaquet@house.idaho.gov or leave a message at 800/626-0471



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