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NEAL DUNN, M.D., CHAIR
COUNCIL ON LEGISLATION



LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The 2012 legislative session begins tomorrow and the FMA staff has been working diligently in preparation for what is sure to be an exciting session. The FMA is tracking more than 270 bills related to health care, including those pertaining to scope-of-practice expansions for ARNPs, pharmacists, optometrists, electrologists and chiropractors; personal injury protection (PIP) reform; physician licensure and other regulatory matters; Medicaid reform; prescription drug abuse; and medical liability reform.

Just last week, Sen. John Thrasher filed one of the FMA's priority pieces of legislation, SB 1506. This bill extends the state's sovereign immunity to physicians providing care in emergency rooms. In addition to this key piece of liability reform, SB 1506 permits defendant providers in a medical liability suit to discuss the case with the plaintiff's other treating providers, and it increases the burden of proof for negligence in cases involving supplemental diagnostic testing in order to reduce costly and unnecessary testing for defensive purposes. These two additional pieces of liability reform were removed from HB 479 before it passed the Legislature at the end of last year's session. The companion bill to SB 1506, HB 385 by Rep. Matt Gaetz, passed out of its first committee of reference on Dec. 7. HB 385 has three more committee stops remaining while SB 1506 has not yet received its committee assignments.

We are awaiting the release of the committee meeting agendas for the House and Senate for this week. The Legislature abides by a 48-hour meeting notice requirement, so most of the agendas for committee meetings this week have not yet been released. As those agendas are unveiled, we will keep everyone apprised of any major actions on the horizon. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact either myself or FMA Vice President of Governmental Affairs Rebecca O'Hara, Esq.

Wishing everyone a very happy new year!

Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Chairman, Council on Legislation