



Capitol Update
February 16, 2009
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Minnesota Academy of Otolaryngology

Budget Deficit Could Grow to \$7 Billion

In a speech to the Minnesota Association of Townships, Governor Pawlenty warned that since the economy is not improving, Minnesota's state budget deficit is likely to grow to \$6 or \$7 billion. The budget gap is currently projected at \$4.8 billion over the next two years, but that figure was released in November. The next budget forecast will be released on March 3.

Federal Stimulus Package—What It Means to Minnesota

Minnesota officials are trying to sort out what the \$789 billion economic stimulus package means to Minnesota. It appears Minnesota will gain \$3 billion from the stimulus package--\$2 billion in general fund money and \$1 billion outside the general fund. The money will ease some of the state's budget problems, at least in the short run.

All of this will require an overhaul of the Governor's budget recommendations. In his budget, he made significant cuts to health care programs but one of the federal conditions would not allow states to cut Medical Assistance program eligibility, under a provision called Maintenance of Effort. A hearing on Wednesday, February 18th will shed light onto the MOE requirements and give us a better idea of which benefits and program eligibility may be reduced.

Leadership in both the House and Senate has been critical of the Governor's use of one-time money and shifts to address the deficit. Some DFL legislators are quietly talking about a using 1/3 cuts; 1/3 one-time money and 1/3 tax increases as the only reasonable way to solve the deficit. The Governor has said that he is adamantly opposed to tax increases and indicated he was willing to work "year round" to do so. The Legislature is expected to wait to release its budget proposal until sometime after the March 3 forecast.

An increase to the provider tax is one of the ways DFL and even moderate GOP legislators are already discussing as something they may be open to in order to raise revenue. Physicians will need to get engaged and let legislators know this is a shortsighted solution.

House and Senate to Hold Town Hearings on the Budget

The House and the Senate have scheduled a number of listening sessions around the state in the next two weeks to hear from citizens related to the current budget deficit. They are hoping the people will come out and provide input on the Governor's budget recommendations, as well as ideas they may have to address the current \$4.8 billion budget shortfall.

These hearings will be before joint House and Senate committees comprised of members from the finance and tax committees. It is important that physicians show up to let legislators hear from you. They need to hear that the health care safety net cannot be expected to take a disproportionate share of the upcoming cuts and about the impact of rate cuts on your practice.

A list of the locations and times of the hearings are below. If you can attend, follow the link below to sign up to speak. Bring personal stories of how these cuts will impact your practice and the patients you serve.

Albert Lea

Friday, February 20th - 10:00 a.m.
Albert Lea City Hall-Council Chambers
221 E Clark Street

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Alexandria

Friday, February 20th - 4:00 p.m.
Alexandria City Hall
704 Broadway

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Bemidji

Friday, February 20th - 3:30 p.m.
Bemidji State University-American Indian
Resource Center Gathering Place
1620 Birchmont Drive

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Bloomington

Tuesday, February 24th - 7:00 p.m.
Bloomington City Hall
1800 W Old Shakopee Rd

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Brainerd

Friday, February 20th - 10:30 a.m.
Washington Educational Services Building-
Board Room
804 Oak Street

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Burnsville

Wednesday, February 25th - 7:30 p.m.
Fairview Ridges Hospital
201 E Nicollet Blvd

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Coon Rapids

Thursday, February 26th - 7:00 p.m.
Coon Rapids City Hall
11155 Robinson Drive

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Duluth

Friday, February 20th - 9:30 a.m.
Duluth City Hall-Council Chambers
411 W 1st Street

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Forest Lake

Thursday, February 26 - 6:30 p.m.
Forest Lake City Hall
220 N. Lake St

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Little Falls

Friday, February 20th - 9:30 a.m.
Morrison County Government Center-
Garden Level Meeting Room
213-1st Avenue SE

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Mankato

Thursday, February 19th – 6:00 p.m.
Mankato Intergovernmental Center-Mankato
River Room
10 Civic Center Plaza

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Marshall

Friday, February 20th - 2:30 p.m.
Southwest Minnesota State University
Lecture Hall
1501 State Street

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Minneapolis

Tuesday, February 24th - 6:00 p.m.
Minneapolis Park Board
2117 West River Road

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Moorhead (Senate Tax Committee)

Friday, February 20th - 12:30 p.m.
Minnesota State University Moorhead-
Comstock Union
1104-7th Avenue South

Plymouth

Thursday, February 26th - 7:00 p.m.
Plymouth City Hall
3400 Plymouth Blvd

[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Rochester

Thursday, February 19th - 6:00 p.m.
Rochester Community and Technical
College-Heintz Center Commons Area

1926 Collegeview Road SE
[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

St. Cloud

Thursday, February 19th - 6:00 p.m.
St. Cloud City Hall-Council Chambers
400-2nd Street South
[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

St. Paul

Thursday, February 26th - 6:00 p.m.
West Minnehaha Recreation Center in
Frogtown
685 Minnehaha Ave W
[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Virginia

Friday, February 20th - 1:30 p.m.
Mesabi Range Community and Technical
College-Small Auditorium
1001 Chestnut Street W
[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Willmar

Thursday, February 19th - 6:00 p.m.
Kennedy Elementary School

824-7th Street SW
[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Winona

Friday, February 20th - 3:30 p.m.
Winona City Hall-Council Chambers
207 Lafayette
[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

White Bear Lake

Wednesday, February 25th - 6:30 p.m.
White Bear Lake High School-South
Campus
3551 McKnight Rd N
[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Woodbury

Monday, February 23rd - 6:00 p.m.
Central Park Ampitheater
8595 Central Park Place
[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Worthington

Friday, February 20th - 10:30 a.m.
Worthington City Hall-Council Chambers
303 Ninth Street
[Sign up to speak at this location](#)

Safe Patient Handling Requirements

In 2007 the Minnesota Legislature passed legislation requiring hospitals and surgical centers to develop plans to ensure the safe handling of patients. In addition they were required to have committees to discuss ways to move patients that would be safe for patients and safe for direct-care staff.

That legislation did not apply to clinics, but it did direct a work group including primary care physicians to meet to discuss how to address these issues at the clinic level. The work group met over the summer of 2007 and developed language that all sides were comfortable with. Please let me know if the MAO has any additional concerns.

That legislation has now been introduced. [SF 594](#) (Higgins-Minneapolis) requires all clinics that regularly move patients to develop a written safe patient handling plan by July 1, 2010. The goal of the plan is by January 1, 2012, “ensuring the safe handling of patients by minimizing manual lifting of patients by direct patient care workers and by utilizing safe patient handling equipment.” The plan shall address:

- (1) assessment of risks with regard to patient handling that considers the patient population and environment of care;
- (2) the acquisition of an adequate supply of appropriate safe patient handling equipment;
- (3) initial and ongoing training of direct patient care workers on the use of this equipment;
- (4) procedures to ensure that physical plant modifications and major construction projects are

consistent with plan goals; and

(5) periodic evaluations of the safe patient handling plan.

Weigh In About Health Care Homes

Health Care Homes are a significant component of health care reform, yet many details are still being formed related to who may qualify and what those qualifications and requirements will be. The MMA , Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, The Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and The Minnesota Chapter of the American College of Physicians are holding a summit to give physicians the chance to provide input about the health care home standards that the state is currently developing as part of the 2008 Health Care Reform Act.

If you're interested in what health care homes mean for your practice and your patients, and are willing to share your thoughts, this forum for physicians is your change to comment on and help define health care home standards.

Join your fellow physicians to make your voice heard on how health care homes will be implemented in Minnesota.

[Click here](#) to register online, or contact Vicki Westling at 612/362-3764 or email her at vwestling@mnmed.org.

When: Saturday, February 28, 2009, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Where: Doubletree Hotel Minneapolis-Park Place

1500 Park Place Boulevard

Minneapolis, MN 55416

Cost: \$25.00 (includes refreshments and lunch)

Committee Schedules for Next Week

Check <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/sched.asp> for the most up-to-date information.