

# Public Policy Update

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From Steve Larson, Public Policy Director



## ➤ *Health and Human Services Conference Committee Meets Throughout the Weekend*

The Health and Human Services Conference Committee (CC) met throughout the weekend, but it didn't meet the deadline to finish its business by Sunday night. The committee is supposed to meet again today.

The committee has made some decisions; many still need to be made.

- Unfortunately, on Saturday evening, May 8th, the Senate agreed with the House proposal to raise the rate of parental fees on high income families, which will generate \$500,000 for the state in fiscal year 2011. Thanks to members of The Arc who responded to our action alert on parental fees over the weekend opposing this increase. We will continue to point out the injustice of this increase until the end of this legislative session.
- The bill still has no cuts to rates for programs for persons with disabilities.
- The CC still needs to decide on mandating coverage by health plans for some autism therapies; whether to support any cuts to physical, occupational, and speech therapies; and whether to agree to restore some of the dental cuts made in 2009.
- The CC has agreed to keep the state-operated dental clinics open.

### **Caution:**

- ✓ The Governor has consistently said he will veto any bill that increases taxes or surcharges.
- ✓ The current bill still anticipates \$408 million in Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), which Congress has not yet approved.
- ✓ With the unallotment decision and the FMAP question looming over the end of this legislative session, there remains much work to do in the final week before the May 17th adjournment. Nothing is final until it is final. We will keep you posted on any action we need you to take.

## ➤ *House and Senate Leaders Submit Budget Proposal*

This morning, Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller, Speaker of the House Margaret Anderson Kelliher, and House Majority Leader Tony Sertich unveiled a proposal to deal with the budget deficit through the end of the fiscal year. Their proposal includes the shift in payments to schools and many of the budget cuts that Governor Pawlenty made last year when he cut \$2.7 billion through unallotment. It also includes \$463 million in new revenue raised by creating a new state income tax bracket for wealthier Minnesotans. The legislative leaders said the new revenues are needed to help pay back the money the state has borrowed from schools to help manage the state's fiscal crisis. The Senate passed the bill this afternoon on a 34-33 vote; the House now needs to take up the bill.

For more on the House/Senate proposal, go to:

<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2010/05/10/dlf-proposes-tax-for-budget-gap/> .

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