



The Legislative Campaign

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

By Bill Sandberg

Important bills are before the Legislature on Emergency Room funding, the On-Call Crisis and Medi-Cal rates; physicians pressed for their passage on April 25 in a CMA rally at the Capitol.

IN THIS ISSUE WE EXPLORE an all too familiar problem, overcrowded emergency departments, the on-call dilemma and low or no reimbursement. While the physician and hospital community may understand the problem, the general public does not, nor do most of our lawmakers. Our panel discussion could be an educational piece in an effort to secure legislative relief.



CMA's sponsored legislation, SB 254 by Senator Joe Dunn, would declare emergency care to be an essential public service, like fire and law enforcement. The bill would create the Critical Emergency Service Facility Fund and appropriate \$200 million to support hospitals that are designated by local emergency medical service (EMS) agencies. Those agencies are already in place.

The Maddy EMS fund, would be augmented by \$100 million to provide additional support to on-call physicians treating the uninsured. EMS agencies would develop plans in consultations with stakeholders for the delivery of emergency and trauma services, including the designation of critical service facilities.



Another bill, SB 117 by Senator Jackie Speier, would require health plans to directly pay providers of emergency services unless



third party payers such as IPAs and medical groups have demonstrated they can pay the claims directly.

Finally, we are again working to secure an additional 20 percent increase in Medi-Cal rates. Last year, after a successful physician rally at the Capitol, we secured an average Medi-Cal rate increase of 16.7 percent, which is just now beginning to reach physician providers. Photos of this year's rally, "Code Blue," appear on this page.



The real question is whether the Legislature will be able to deal with these and competing issues against California's Biggest Ever Crisis; the energy problem and rolling blackouts. Time will tell.

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