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Opening week of session

This is the first week of Iowa's 89th general assembly. As is typical on the opening day of legislative session, the general assembly opened with the swearing in of newly elected legislators and opening remarks from both chambers. Republican leaders focused on reducing taxes, maintaining conservative spending and getting students back to school. Democrats focused on the pandemic response and economic recovery.

Other highlights of opening remarks from Iowa's legislative leaders include:

- Speaker of the House Pat Grassley (R-New Hartford): "As we address that budget for Fiscal Year 21, we must continue to provide the same level of disciplined budgeting that set us up for success in years past. We will fund Iowans' priorities, meet our commitments to the taxpayer, and we will do it in a responsible way. It will be an even bigger task than ever before."
- House Majority Leader Matt Windschitl (R-Missouri Valley): "Our great country and state are going through extremely unprecedented times right now, and it is incumbent on all of us, as leaders throughout our state, to come together and embrace our shared values. We must lead by example and show Iowans that despite political differences we can work together for the betterment of those we serve."
- House Democratic Leader Todd Prichard (D-Charles City): "The first priority this session must be working to get the pandemic under control. A failure of leadership at both the federal and state level has already left over 4,000 Iowans dead and our state's response has been greatly inadequate. Next, we need a robust COVID package focused on long-term recovery efforts to help our economy. We need aggressive plans to help families recover, get kids back in school safely, reopen small businesses and support our dedicated health care workers who are the front line of this pandemic."
- Senate President Jake Chapman (R-Adel): "'Back to normal' has been the finish line frequently proclaimed in the midst of our universal disruption. But today we have a choice. Today, we can choose to go back to life as normal or we can choose to work, sacrifice and endure for a better life, a better tomorrow, a better Iowa. My hope is that this chamber does not wish for life to return to normal, but that we set our sights on the brighter tomorrow."
- Senate Majority Leader Jack Whitver (R-Ankeny): "For years, we have been saying we need to be responsible and budget conservatively so we can prepare our state for hard times. Last year, our state saw what 'hard times' really means. We experienced a virus that threatened the lives and livelihoods of Iowans and their families. We watched some of our favorite businesses in our communities close their doors forever. We went months without seeing loved ones in hopes of keeping them safe. And then, in the midst of already unprecedented times, we watched a massive storm tear through the middle of our state, giving Iowans one more burden to bear. Despite facing all of these challenges, Iowans never stopped helping each other."
- Senate Minority Leader Zach Wahls (D-Coralville): "Scientists know a lot more today about viruses than they did in 1918, because in the century since 1918, our government — by, of and for the people — has invested taxpayer dollars into public health research. We funded the greatest research universities in the world. That's why in a matter of months, we were able to develop therapeutics like remdesivir, which was piloted and tested at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City. It's why we were able to shatter the record for developing vaccines to help us defeat COVID-19, including one that was also piloted and tested at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics and new nanovaccines that are being developed at Iowa State University. This lifesaving work of scientists around the world — and right here in Iowa — is an inspiring testament to what humanity can accomplish when we work together and follow the facts."

A full recap of legislative remarks can be found on the webpage for each caucus – Iowa House Republicans, Iowa House Democrats, Iowa Senate Republicans and Iowa Senate Democrats.

Besides opening remarks, the first week of session included a condition of the state from Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, a condition of the judiciary from Chief Justice Christensen and the condition of the guard from Major General Ben Corell.

The first week also saw the introduction of many bills and the beginning of Committee and subcommittee work.

With session in full swing, this is a great time to reach out to legislators to welcome them to the 2021 session. This is a great way to develop and build relations and lets legislators know who to turn to on hospital issues. IHA encourages members to use the web address below to send your lawmakers a quick note.

<https://www.ihaonline.org/advocacy/iha-hospital-action-network/>

The Iowa Hospital Association looks forward to continuing to bring you updates as the session advances.

Governor provides 2021 Condition of the State address

Tuesday evening, Gov. Kim Reynolds held her annual condition of the state address in the House chamber. Early in her remarks, she detailed how crucial health care workers have been this past year saying, "In 2020, you worked some of the longest hours, in the most uncertain conditions. Your actions saved lives. Your spirit inspired us." Additionally, Gov. Reynolds highlighted many of IHA's key legislative priorities including:

- Encouraging and expanding telehealth for mental health and general health services.
- Improving and supporting rural emergency medical services.
- Increasing mental health funding by \$15 million each year over the next two years to fully fund the adult and child mental health system.

Gov. Reynolds also addressed workforce concerns by advocating for continued work on the Future Ready Iowa program and highlighted the work hospitals are doing around COVID-19 vaccines. IHA is grateful the governor had such a focus on health care during this year's address and is looking forward to working with her and state legislators on these issues.

House Human Resources Committee

The House Human Resources Committee met Tuesday and received an update from the Joint Director of the Iowa Department of Human Services and the Iowa Department of Public Health Kelly Garcia about the vaccine rollout in Iowa. Garcia answered questions for lawmakers about the first and second phases, which will be started around the first of February.

The Iowa Disease Advisory Council provided their recommendations to Garcia about Phase 1B of the roll out. Because of the current and short-term projections for vaccine allocation for Iowa, the council recommendations for Phase 1B focus on people age 75 and over, as well as other high-risk populations. Garcia accepted this recommendations and added inspectors responsible for health, life and safety, and government officials, including staff, to ensure continuity of government while engaged in state business at the Iowa Capitol during the legislative session. See the council's recommendations and response using the web address below.

bit.ly/35lZPC6

Legislation we're tracking this week

The first week of legislative session has seen many bills introduced for consideration. Among those is a bill to eliminate Iowa's certificate-of-need process. The bill, Senate File 4, was introduced by Sen. Brad Zaun (R-Urbandale). The bill would completely remove the process. The bill has not been set for subcommittee and IHA will remain vigilant for any movement related to it this session. Please reach out to Kim Murphy with any questions or concerns.

Monday, legislation in the Senate was introduced that would require hospitals to report prices for services charged before any negotiations or discounts. Senate File 5 would require hospitals to post on their websites the price of the 25 most-common health care services provided by the hospitals and the 75 most-common inpatient and 75 most-common outpatient services provided by the hospitals. This bill has been assigned to a subcommittee, but a subcommittee meeting has not been scheduled.

Use the link below to find updates on the legislation IHA is tracking:

ihaonline.org/advocacy/stay-informed/legislation-now/

Telehealth reimbursement meeting scheduled with Wellmark

Wellmark has developed conceptual payment methodology and implementation/measuring criteria for providers of telehealth. To ensure members are fully educated about the concept, IHA has scheduled an all-membership call for **9:30 am Tuesday, Jan. 19**. During the call, Wellmark representatives will present the payment methodology, and members will have the opportunity to offer their thoughts.

Throughout the pandemic, hospitals have relied on telehealth as a safe platform to provide and maintain patient care. Based on input from Iowa hospitals, IHA has been advocating strongly for payment parity for telehealth to maintain and advance this vital service. Besides developing potential payment criteria, Wellmark is extending payment parity for virtual services until at least June 30.

Please plan to attend this important meeting to learn about the Wellmark methodology and help guide IHA's response to this proposal.

Click on the link below to register:

us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_KVAIDcwrSTu7nJPAmP3Frw

Listen to IHA's Capitol Update



IHA knows the importance of updates coming from the Capitol and works to provide easy ways to access that information. IHA members now have a convenient way to stay up to date on advocacy issues with the Iowa Hospital Association Capitol Update.

Capitol Update can be accessed through a Zoom video recording or audio-only version.

Podcast: soundcloud.com/user-795290658/iha-capitol-update-january-14-2021/s-U1rNFcuJx3i

Questions can be directed to Joah Hogan at IHA.

How to stay in the know

Throughout legislative session, IHA has developed several ways to keep you informed. Stay tuned throughout session for weekly editions of *Legislative Bulletin*, biweekly Capitol Update, IHA's Facebook page, Twitter account and LinkedIn account (web addresses are below). IHA also will mobilize hospital advocates through action alerts when legislators need to hear about hospital issues. **Advocates can sign up for email or text message IHA action alerts at ihaonline.org/takeaction.**

Links to bookmark:

- IHA's bill tracker - ihaonline.org/advocacy/bill-tracker/
- Facebook page - facebook.com/iowahospital
- Twitter account - twitter.com/iowahospital
- LinkedIn account - linkedin.com/company/iowa-hospital-association
- Legislator contact information - legis.iowa.gov/legislators



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