

*MOS At the Capitol*  
February 19, 2009

Sara Noznesky, MOS Lobbyist

### **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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 MOS has any 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](mailto: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)

### **Day at the Capitol a Big Success**

The MMA Day at the Capitol, of which MOS was a co-sponsor, was held on Thursday February 5. Over 130 physicians from throughout the state showed up to hear from key policy makers and meet with their individual legislators.

The group heard from Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Minneapolis), Chair of the House Health Care and Human Services Oversight and Policy Committee. He talked about the need to stop the drastic cuts proposed by the Governor, continue the momentum on health care reform, and oppose the elimination of the Health Care Access Fund. When asked about the primary seat belt bill, he said he was the chief author of the bill and that he is optimistic that it will pass this year.

The physicians in attendance also heard from Rep Steve Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud), a member of the House Health Care Policy and Health Care Finance committees, and Sen. Linda Berglin (DFL-Minneapolis) Chair of the Senate Health and Human Services Finance Division. Both talked about the need to continue health care reform efforts. Gottwalt discussed ways to ensure the private market is more affordable for all Minnesotans. Berglin stated that she wants to be in the state that provides MinnesotaCare, not "Minnesota-Used-to-Care."

The MMA developed an issue brief to provide talking points for attendees when they met with their legislators. ([Budget Issue Brief](#)) Feel free to use this material if you attend the listening sessions, or if you have other opportunities to talk with your legislators.

### **Committee Schedules for Next Week**

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