

**ND HIT Steering Committee
Legislation/Policy Work Group
Update on 10/27/08 meeting with Lt. Gov Dalrymple**

Wanted to update the group on our meeting on 10/28 with Lt. Gov. Dalrymple and Tammy Wahl. Also present for the meeting were Pam Sharp, Budget Director, and Lori Laschkewitsch, senior analyst, OMB. Accompanying me to meet with the Lt. Gov. were Chip Thomas, NDHA, and Dean Haase, NDMA.

At the start of our meeting, the Lt. Gov. admitted that he was not familiar at all with the HIT Steering Committee and our activities. So, using copies of the overhead presentation Lynette did for the IT interim legislative committee, we reviewed the creation of the committee, its purpose, activities and funding to date and by which entities. We also reviewed the mission and vision and the members of the Steering Committee and workgroups.

National information about cost of implementing health IT; projections that federal and private funding will be diminished due to the current economic state and the importance of health IT for patient satisfaction and safety also were shared. We then discussed the current financial state of healthcare in ND, especially of the rural facilities based on a survey completed by CAH, which showed the 22/27 who completed the survey all at negative margins. We also discussed the testimony presented by Kimber Wraalstad to the IT interim legislative committee, which outlined the cost of implementation and continued maintenance for the NW Alliance project, as an example of the investment required in health IT by rural facilities. We discussed the HIT survey just completed and soon to be released and the concerns about the lack of IT human resources and the importance of EMRs/EHRs in recruitment and retention. Finally, using a recently completed survey from NDHA, we shared the impact healthcare facilities have on the ND economy and economic development.

We asked for two things: 1) that there be recognition for the HIT Steering Committee and project by the state and that some entity be made responsible for its activities and continued existence and 2) dollars for a grant pool which could be accessed by health entities to assist with HIT assessment and planning; implementation and telehealth activities.

Discussion from the Lt. Gov. centered on what other funding, including federal, might be available for our needs; confusion about the lack of dollars for capital and the definition of capital for facilities and how IT infrastructure fits into capital; discussion about the status of the state's IT projects: (MMIS and Master Client Index - still delayed) and the limitations in the state budget.

Outcomes of the meeting were: 1) Lt. Gov. felt HIT is an important issue and should get support to continue to move forward and the state should be involved; 2) perhaps there would be some way, once the state has completed their IT projects that some things could be replicated in the private arena with the state serving as a resource; 3) although much is already on the request list and priorities will need to be assigned, our request will be added to the list. The Lt. Gov. said he was going to seek advice from Lisa Feldner, ITD. We said we welcomed that since she is part of our group.

The Lt. Gov. also shared that they have three draft budgets. One assuming Measures 1 & 2 are both defeated; One assuming one or the other is defeated and one is not and one assuming both pass. He also said they are committed to the rebase of Medicaid reimbursement as recommended by the ND Human Services Dept.. We stressed that we certainly do not want to have our request circumvent any other in a way that is perceived as detrimental by the healthcare community. We were to have 45 minutes with the Lt. Gov. but he gave us a little over an hour and kept repeating that he thought HIT was very important and needed to be kept on the radar so the activities to date would not be for naught and so that we can continue to move forward.

We will wait to see what is included when the Governor's final budget comes out and continue our discussions for legislative action in preparation of the 2009 Session. The next Legislation/Policy work group meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19 at 10:00 a.m.

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