



2021 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

March 19, 2021

House COVID-19 outbreak forces two-week pause on 2021 session

On March 19, the House cancelled all committee meetings and the full House adjourned until April 6. The announcement comes after six members of the House tested positive for COVID-19 this week so far. Following this announcement, the Senate also adjourned until April 6. The Legislature still has several appropriations bills to pass before finalizing fiscal year 2022.

Status: The Idaho Legislature will pause business until April 6

GME funding bill passes Senate, awaiting House consideration

The health education portion of the State Board of Education budget, which overwhelmingly passed the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee last week, passed the Senate 33-2. SB 1175 provides \$900,000 of new state funding for 15 GME positions throughout the state in family practice and psychiatry. The sponsor of the bill was Sen. Ward-Engelking (D-Boise) and the IMA lobby team will continue to advocate for support and passage of the bill through the House and to the governor's desk in the coming weeks. Stay tuned for future opportunities to contact your representative when the Legislature returns in April.

Status: SB 1175 passed the Senate by a vote of 33-2 and is awaiting consideration before the House

Medicaid budget passes the Senate

On March 18, the Senate passed SB 1185, the fiscal year 2022 budget for the Medicaid program by a vote of 29-6. The bill fully funds the entire Medicaid budget without cost containment measures and allows Medicaid to transfer funds between all the various Medicaid budgets. Last year, the Medicaid expansion program was not allowed this authority, which resulted in the temporary hold on reimbursement to providers that IMA reported on earlier this month.

Status: SB 1185 passed the Senate by a vote of 29-6 and is awaiting consideration before the House

End of 2021 legislative session remains unclear with federal relief funds on the way

While March 26 was the planned target date for the final day of the 2021 legislative session, it remains unclear how long the Idaho Legislature will remain in Boise. This became even more unclear given the adjournment until April 6 due to increasing COVID-19 cases in the House.

Several questions also remain about how the Legislature will handle the incoming federal funds from the recently passed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Idaho is set to receive an estimated \$1.9 billion for relief related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The main question is, will the Legislature appropriate the money, or will the governor allocate the funds as he did with the CARES Act funding in 2020?

In 2020, the CARES Act funding arrived when the Legislature was out of session, which meant the governor had the responsibility of allocating the funds. Gov. Little formed the Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC) made up of state agencies, legislators, businesses, tribes, and more to provide input as to how the funds should be allocated. The funding was allocated to help small businesses, build broadband capacity, purchase PPE, and provide property tax relief for local governments to pass along to Idahoans, among many other things.

However, with the funding set to arrive from ARPA, the Legislature is likely to remain in session in order to have a say in how the funding is allocated. The funding from ARPA will have different parameters on how the money can be used. For example, the funding cannot be spent in the form of tax relief but the timeline to spend the funding does not expire until Dec. 31, 2024. However, some of the ARPA funding must be allocated within 30-60 days, mostly K-12 education funds. Funding for other programs, such as the Provider Relief Fund and stimulus checks, bypass the state government and are sent directly for their intended recipient.

For more information on the ARPA funds, [visit this link from the governor](#).

Federal update

[Becerra confirmed as Secretary of Health and Human Services](#)

On March 18, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, President Biden's nominee for Secretary of Health and Human Services, was confirmed by the United States Senate by a 50-49 vote. Becerra was a former California congressman and received the endorsement of the American Medical Association.

To view a list of ALL healthcare-related bills and their statuses, visit the IMA Bill Tracker on the IMA website

IMA Bill Tracker

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