

Medicaid Matters

State leaders lobby Congress in effort to delay seven regulatory cuts

Physicians, consumer advocates and state health and human service officials throughout Alabama continue to vigorously lobby Congress to impose a moratorium on seven regulations that would potentially cost the state of Alabama at least \$578 million in the next year, or as much as \$2.9 billion over the next five years.



The moratorium legislation is included in the supplemental war spending bill which now awaits action in Congress. In addition to jeopardizing Medicaid funds, the proposed regulations impose deep cuts to services funded by the departments of Public Health, Human Resources, Youth Services, Rehabilitation Services and Mental Health and Mental Retardation, plus local school systems in Alabama. [Click here to read more about the impact of the seven regulations on Alabama >>](#)

“It is critical for the health of those dependent on Alabama Medicaid that the moratorium be extended,” said Medicaid Commissioner Carol H. Steckel. “We are urging everyone to contact members of the Alabama Congressional delegation to emphasize the urgent need to support this moratorium.”

Medicaid “fully funded” for FY09 following regular, special sessions

Legislative approval of the General Fund budget, a supplemental appropriation and an allocation from the state’s Children First Trust Fund mean that the Alabama Medicaid Agency is fully funded through the end of the 2009 fiscal year, making it possible for the Agency to maintain existing levels of services for nearly 1 million Alabamians served by the Agency, according to Medicaid Commissioner Carol H. Steckel.

Governor Bob Riley signed the \$2 billion General Fund budget, which included the governor’s recommended \$149.6 million increase for Medicaid, on May 19 during the closing hours of the 2008 regular legislative session. A \$5.3 million supplemental appropriation for the current fiscal year was approved May 31 during a called special session along with a \$35 million allocation to the Agency from the Children First Trust Fund for FY 2009.



“In passing the General Fund Budget for the 2009 Fiscal Year, the Alabama Legislature not only demonstrated compassion for the health care needs of the state’s most vulnerable citizens, but also great courage and leadership by approving a fiscally-responsible budget,” said Commissioner Steckel. “We deeply appreciate the efforts of Governor Riley, House Governmental Appropriation Committee Chair Rep. John Knight and Senate Finance and Taxation (General Fund) Committee Chair Roger Bedford, for their support of the Agency and the Alabama citizens it serves.”



- Inside:**
- ◆ Perfect property audit earns Medicaid third consecutive recognition
 - ◆ Robert Lee is Mike Lewis Extra Mile Award winner for second quarter

Perfect property audit earns Medicaid third consecutive recognition

Perfection is not just the goal, but the norm at the Alabama Medicaid Agency where attention to detail and a commitment to responsible use of taxpayer money has resulted in the Agency's third consecutive perfect state property audit. The 2008 audit, coordinated by Inventory Control Officer Lane Pasley, accounted for 1,340 items valued at \$16,648,442.

"We take our obligation to be accountable to the state's taxpayers very seriously. I am very proud that every item was accounted for and located. I want to especially thank Lane Pasley for his great work in tracking all of our property," said Medicaid Commissioner Carol H. Steckel.

Pasley, however, gives all the credit to Medicaid's staff. "These perfect audits wouldn't be possible without the efforts of our employees here and in the district offices," he said. "We've got good people here."

For about three weeks every two years, the State Auditor's Office audits the entire property inventory of the Agency's main and district offices. To help those state audits come out perfect, Pasley conducts an annual in-house inventory in order to identify and locate any missing items, a six-month process. While the focus of the state audit is on items over \$500, Pasley admits he keeps track of everything under \$500 as well. [Read More >>](#)



Lane Pasley displays the Certificate of Commendation from State Auditor Samantha Shaw and Governor Bob Riley for conducting a perfect inventory audit.

Robert Lee is Mike Lewis Extra Mile Award winner for second quarter



Robert Lee, left, receives the Extra Mile Certificate from Commissioner Steckel.

Updating the Agency's claims processing system on February 23, 2008, represented the culmination of more than two years' work and millions of individual employee hours designed to ensure that providers' claims were processed accurately. Without Robert Lee's extensive knowledge about Medicaid eligibility and technical skill, Alabama Medicaid's move to the new system might not have been as fluid. Lee's tenacious testing of the recipient component not only paved the way for a smooth transition, but earned him the Mike Lewis Extra Mile Award for second quarter of 2008.

Nominated by a supervisor or co-workers, the recipient is chosen by a selection committee of fellow employees. The award is named in memory of former Medicaid Commissioner Mike Lewis.

Testing the new system involved, among other things, meticulously comparing hundreds of printed screen shots with what was actually on the computer screen to ensure no details were missed. Each piece of the system had to be tested and retested before it went live with countless hours spent creating situations that mirrored how the eligibility workers would use the system. The bulk of the most recent push to refine the system took place between September 2007 and March 2008, while Lee was working on the Cost of Living Adjustments. [Read More >>](#)

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