

2014 Legislative Session Overview

Oregon's short 2014 Legislative Session adjourned on March 7th, 2 days ahead of the constitutionally required 35 days. In the roughly 262 pieces of legislation introduced, legislators successfully tackled an expansion of cancer research at Oregon Health and Sciences University with approval of \$200 million in bonding authority, but failed to see other big ticket items as legalization of marijuana, gun control and the Columbia River Crossing pass. 2014 was yet another productive legislative session for the Oregon Dental Association.

In late 2013, the Oregon Board of Pharmacy promulgated rules that required all licensees who dispense any kind or amount of prescription drugs in their offices to register as a dispensary and pay annual fees. The Oregon Dental Association worked in partnership with the Oregon Medical Association and the Oregon Nurses Association to draft and support **Senate Bill 1561**, which prevented the Board of Pharmacy from implementing this regulation. We argued that this was a solution in search of a problem, as no dentist has ever had a complaint filed against them in the last 10 years for improper dispensary of drugs, according to the Board of Dentistry. The bill ultimately never made it out of committee, with a mutual understanding from each respective associations and board that they would convene an interim workgroup and come back in 2015 with agreed upon legislation.

House Bill 4070, first introduced by Representative Vic Gilliam in 2013, allows a licensee who received a past disciplinary action against them to request the Board of Dentistry expunge his/her license after 5 years, as long as it was self-reported and no patients were physically or monetarily harmed. The Oregon Dental Association supported the bill in 2013 and likewise testified in support this last session. The bill also received great interest from other professional medical associations who supported the concept. As a result, the Chair of the Health Care Committee asked all interested parties create a uniform process for each board and come back in 2015 with a solution to expunging a record while continuing to protect patients.

After hearing from member dentists across the state about how the Board of Dentistry handled the compliance of weekly spore testing, the Oregon Dental Association supported the passage of **Senate Bill 1519**. This bill codifies the recommendation from the Center for Disease Control about weekly spore testing, it removes from the Board of Dentistry website (but not the permanent record) a licensee's disciplinary action if it only relates to failure to spore test and creates some liability protections for the Oregon Health and Sciences University. The bill was designed to prevent potential confusion between failures to comply with weekly spore test versus a dentist not sterilizing their

equipment. It also addresses a concern the Oregon Dental Association has about how the Board of Dentistry's communicates with their licensees. The bill's passage created an opportunity for how the Board and the Association can work together in the future to better communicate rules and regulations to members.

A special thank you goes out to State Senator Fred Girod, a retired dentist from Stayton, who sponsored the spore testing legislation and ensured its passage. Oregon is in the midst of an unprecedented transformation in our health care delivery system. Oral health has been recognized as a key component to overall health, yet is being integrated into a greater health structure without the benefit of a dedicated dental presence and voice to influence policy. Oregon is missing opportunities to promote oral health through statewide dental public health programs due to lack of leadership and dedicated and comprehensive funding in the public health department.

Through our advocacy and with the help of Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, the Oregon Dental Association successfully passed a budget note directing the Oregon Health Authority to report to the Emergency Board in September a plan to appoint a state dental director as part of the agency's 2015-17 budget.

Although this is a great first step, our work is not done. We will continue to advocate for a position description of that State Dental director that includes:

- Planning, directing and coordinating the oral health unit the Oregon Health Authority;
- Coordinating with state health agencies and programs and external partnerships to ensure that the relationships between chronic diseases and oral health are taken into consideration when providing care and preventive programs;
- Forging internal and external partnerships and ensuring that oral health is addressed when policies are being considered and programs are being planned;
- Leading the development and expansion of oral public health campaigns and care delivery systems.