



Legislative Update for 2014 Session

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Vermont Legislative Session

- Vermont's legislative cycle runs on a biennium model – so each bill, except for the budget, has two years in order to pass.
- Each session runs from early January to mid-May depending on when the lawmakers finish their work – which largely includes the budget and the tax bill.
- Shap Smith, the Speaker of the House, is projecting a May 9th adjournment – which means they will probably be done on May 10.
- The budget has passed the House, passed Senate Appropriations and is scheduled for debate on the Senate floor this Monday.
- After it passes the Senate it will go back to the House and then into conference committee.
- After the budget passes, the fall of the gavel on the session comes quickly.
- This fall the governor and lawmakers face elections in November.

ACS CAN 2014 Policy Priorities

- Cancer has become one of the most preventable and increasingly curable life-threatening diseases – but only if we take the steps necessary to prevent it outright, detect it early, and improve access to care. To this end, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network in Vermont is working on the following legislative priorities in support of our mission to end cancer as a major health problem.

Ensuring Access to Quality Affordable Health Care

- Medicaid Coverage: ACS CAN is working to defend funding for the state Medicaid program that provides access to cancer care for the state's low income Vermonters and last year's policy decision to expand Medicaid eligibility, which seeks to provide health care coverage to an additional 18,000 low-income Vermonters.
- Affordable Care Act: We are working to ensure that the Affordable Care Act is implemented in a manner that advances and strengthens our health care reform efforts and health care system as a whole, and does not result in any rollbacks in current medical benefits and legal protections in public insurance plans.

ACS CAN 2014 Policy Priorities

Lung Cancer and Tobacco Control

- Cigarette Tax: At the beginning of the session, lawmakers reached out to ACS CAN, the Coalition for a Tobacco Free VT and our coalition partners, the American Heart Association and the American Lung Association for support for their intention to sponsor a bill to raise the cigarette tax by .80 cents. We testified in support of raising the tobacco tax instead by \$1.25, but the Ways and Means Committee instead passed a 92 % of e-cigs wholesale price but it was taken out of the Senate Finance version.
- Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program Funding: Last year, through ASC CAN's partnership with the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont, we achieved level funding for Vermont's Tobacco Control Program at \$3.9 million for the next three years. This year we prefaced our concern for the sustainability of this program in FY2017.
- Protect the Tobacco Trust Fund: The Governor's Recommended FY15 budget would zero out the Tobacco Trust Fund and leave the future of the Tobacco Control Program at risk. We have encouraged lawmakers to put the recent \$8.3 million settlement from RJ Reynolds into the fund.
- Ensure Tobacco Tax Equity of all Tobacco Products: The miscellaneous tax bill currently includes a slight increase in taxes on snuff from \$2.24 to \$2.62, which would raise \$700,000 and equate to tax parity with a pack of cigarettes.

ACS CAN 2014 Policy Priorities

H.217

Smoke-free legislation aimed at cutting down on Vermonter's exposure to secondhand smoke. This bill was passed out of the House, out of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee and scheduled to be heard on the Senate floor as early as Monday of next week. Specifically the bill:

H.217 would reduce secondhand smoke exposure for hotel employees, state employees, and children:

- Hotels: Expands current law to prohibit smoking in lodging establishments for transient traveling or public vacationing such resort, hotel and motel sleeping quarters and adjoining rooms rented to guests.
- State-owned Property: Creates a 25-foot smoke free zone around all state-owned buildings.
- Prohibits smoking on the grounds of any hospital or secure residential recovery facility owned or operated by the state (currently applies only to new facility in Berlin).
- Motor Vehicles: Prohibits smoking in motor vehicles that are occupied by children required to be restrained in a car seat.

ACS CAN 2014 Policy Priorities

- **H.217 (continued)**

- **H.217 proposes to codify Department of Children and Families and Agency of Education and Department of Forest Parks and Recreation regulations:**

- Public schools: Expands current tobacco prohibition to include tobacco substitutes (i.e. electronic cigarettes) on public school grounds or at public school sponsored events.
- Childcare facilities and family homes: Prohibits the use of tobacco products and tobacco substitutes on the premises of any licensed child care facility or after school program.
- State Parks and Forests: Prohibits smoking in designated smoke free properties or grounds owned or leased by the state.

ACS CAN 2014 Policy Priorities

- **Expanding Cancer Prevention, Treatment and Survivorship**
- **Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Funding:** ACS CAN has advocated for increased funding of the Ladies First Program, the state breast and cervical cancer screening program for low- income, uninsured women administered by the Vermont Department of Health. More than 90 women in Vermont will die of breast cancer this year -- many of them simply because they lacked access to early detection screening. The Ladies First program is a critical safety net for medically underserved women living in Vermont. Last year, the legislature passed level state funding for this important program, while federal funding for Ladies First was reduced.
- **Insurance Coverage for Cancer Screenings:** ACS CAN successfully advocated for the passage of bill H. 136, which addresses the out-of-pocket costs associated with breast and colon cancer screenings, creating a seamless policy between state law and the federal Affordable Care Act. The American Cancer Society has actively defended this law, as health care reform critics are currently attacking it, claiming it is a 'new mandate' that will overburden the state with additional health care costs.

ACS CAN 2014 Policy Priorities

- **Obesity Prevention**
- **Encourage Shared Use Agreements:** In partnership with the American Heart Association, the Eat Well, Play More coalition and the Live Healthy VT coalition, ACS CAN advocated for H.122/S.13 as an effort to encourage school districts to make school property available to community members outside the school day for non-school recreational activities. The bill went to House Education but was voted down as lawmakers were not convinced this is a problem and liability issues. ACS CAN supports providing greater protection from liability to schools when they open their grounds and facilities up to the public for non-school recreational activities.
- **Physical Education and Physical Activity Requirements:** In partnership with the American Heart Association, the Eat Well, Play More coalition and the Live Healthy VT coalition, ASC CAN supported changing current school regulations by requiring two days of physical education weekly and thirty minutes of physical activity daily in a given week, as well as a number of other curriculum changes. These proposals were included in the draft proposed rules but struck from the final version. Currently, the Senate Education Committee is considering adding a requirement that kids get at least 20 minutes to eat their lunch to the miscellaneous education bill.

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Thank You!!!!

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