

# Arkansas Hospital Association Legislative Bulletin

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**DATE:** January 31, 2014  
**TO:** AHA voterVOICE Contacts  
**FROM:** Jodiane Tritt, Vice President for Government Relations  
**SUBJECT:** Fiscal Session 2014

It doesn't seem like it is already time for the Fiscal Session! February 10 will mark the first day, but budget hearings and committee meetings haven't seemed to have let up since the end of the regular session.

There is no question that reauthorizing the appropriation for the Arkansas Private Option (APO) will be the AHA's number one priority during the fiscal session. There is no doubt that we will call on you to continue to thank your legislators who vote to approve the appropriation during the regular session and let them know how much the APO means to your community! Already, almost 100,000 Arkansans have insurance who were previously uninsured. Also, please remember that because the APO is an existing program, budgets were prepared that incorporated savings from the APO into the overall state general revenue budget. If the APO is not reauthorized, not only would those Arkansans lose insurance coverage on July 1, 2014, but the state budget would have to find another \$89 million to make up for the difference for the APO projected savings.

Please remember that we'll still have the high hurdle of attaining 75 of the 100 House members and 27 of the 35 Senators. During the general session, 77 of 100 House members and 28 of the 35 Senators voted in favor of the appropriation that included the APO. It will take all hands on deck to keep our legislators supportive. Please educate yourself on what the APO means for your local hospitals and your communities as a whole.

I look forward to sending you updates as the session progresses. THANK YOU for all that you do to make sure that your legislators hear from you. They are working diligently for you – let's help keep them informed on the value of the APO!

Jodiane

Feel free to use these points when talking with your legislators, too.

- The Private Option is the most critical economic, fiscal and health issue facing Arkansas right now. It is Arkansas's way of mitigating some of the negative consequences of the federal Affordable Care Act.

- **The Private Option can create much-needed jobs across Arkansas.** Studies have found that the Private Option will result in an increase of approximately **8,600 new jobs** in 2014 and **10,600 new jobs** by 2020.
- These jobs will not only be in hospitals, clinics, nursing and other health facilities, but also in those industries that support the Arkansas health care industry. Our communities will benefit from increases in wages and earnings.
- **The Private Option is a good deal for Arkansas and will help our people in need.** The federal health care law mandates that everyone have healthcare coverage, but many Arkansans cannot afford it. To provide health care coverage to more low income uninsured adults, the Private Option ensures that the federal government will pay 100% of the costs in the first few years and 90% of the costs after that.
- **The Private Option would help transform tax burdens to taxpayers.** Unhealthy people are unproductive people. The APO provides coverage to Arkansans making up to 138% of the poverty level. That would allow a family of four earning less than \$30,657 a year to afford healthcare coverage for every member of the family.
- The Private Option helps reduce uncompensated care in hospitals by about \$200 million. We still lose, but we lose MUCH less with the APO.