

WHA Advocacy Day 2004

April 7, Monona Terrace, Madison

Review

The 2004 WHA Advocacy Day set a new attendance record—more than 500 volunteers, trustees, and hospital employees converged on Monona Terrace in Madison. Wisconsin Hospital Association Chair Charles Shabino, MD, welcomed and thanked the health care advocates for their continuing support. The WHA Advocacy Team, led by Senior Vice President Eric Borgerding, started the day's events with a recap of the recent legislative session and a look ahead to issues that will likely take center stage when the legislature reconvenes.



Jodi Bloch

Borgerding and Jodi Bloch, WHA vice president of government affairs, both credited the progress and the positive change in the health care environment and in the state legislature to the tireless efforts of health care advocates, including those seated in the audience.

“Hospitals have gained stature in the capitol. We have strong relationships with the Governor and with legislative leaders,” Borgerding said. “Hospitals are a key player in the state capitol, and you made that possible.”

Governor Jim Doyle

In his introduction of Governor Jim Doyle, WHA President Steve Brenton reflected on Doyle's first few days in office. He mentioned the “surprise” that Governor Doyle was handed—the \$3.2 billion deficit in the state budget.

“Governor Doyle faced tough decisions, but he placed a high priority on protecting Medicaid, Wisconsin's safety net health care program for poor mothers and children,” said Brenton.



Governor Jim Doyle

Brenton recognized Doyle's commitment to largely shielding Medicaid from cuts, supporting the transfer of hospital data collection from the state to WHA and for reprioritizing dollars within the technical school to expand access to training and education in health careers.

In his address, Governor Doyle said that while the state has come through some very tough times, it is back on track but not out of the woods.

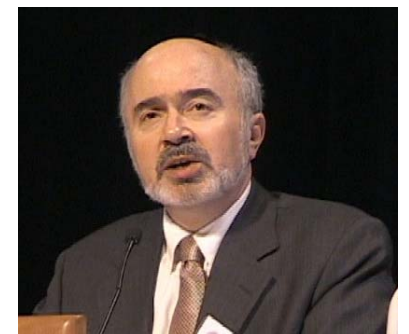
“WHA understood that everyone has to share in the sacrifice and focus on what is most important to us,” according to Doyle. “WHA adhered to a basic Wisconsin value—we are all in this together.”



Charles Shabino, MD



Eric Borgerding



Steve Brenton

Doyle said he had to make hard decisions that affected health care and hospitals. He noted that the funding cut in graduate medical education (GME) was one that he would never have made in “good times.”

“As times get better, we will restore (GME funding) and work to get that done,” Doyle said.

Doyle complimented WHA and its member hospitals for what he called a willingness to make basic changes, like in the area of providing quality and safety data to consumers.

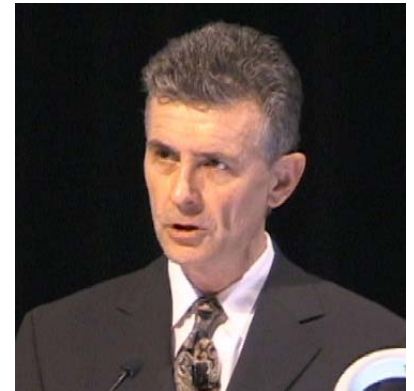
“Witness the CheckPoint program. It provides reliable, valid measures on quality and safety. Many health care providers talk about how important it is to be transparent. But not so many have stepped up to the plate and put the data out there for the consuming public to look at and use as they make health care decisions,” Doyle said.

Fred Grandy

Fred Grandy challenges the notion that somehow the Bush – Gore campaigns created ugly politics.

“Let’s separate fact from fiction. The argument you hear is that this smack down (between candidates) is somehow bad for democracy. It is fiction that this brand of mean-spirited politics was ushered in by Gore and Bush. What happened in Florida was not the dark dawn, but the continuation of a long and hallowed tradition stretching back to Thomas Jefferson in 1800,” according to Grandy.

Grandy, a former congressman from Iowa and a regular on the popular 70’s show *The Love Boat* said he is often asked if he misses not being in congress. The quick-witted Grandy said he read a lament in a Colorado newspaper about how the US has the premiere legislative body in the world, yet, how can it be so cranky?



Fred Grandy

“That is the part I miss the most. I think civility is enormously overrated. If you want to change society, get your game in shape. Democracy is a contact sport,” Grandy challenged.

And his words of advice for the health care advocates in the audience? Keep your legislator on a short leash, they serve you. “Any discussion about health care and politics begins with what private citizens should do,” Grandy said. “Ultimately, private citizens bring about major change.”

Gene Ulm

Fred Grandy said it earlier in the day — nasty politics do not cause people to tune out and not vote.

Gene Ulm, a polling expert from Public Opinion Strategies, confirmed it. He offered hard data to back Grandy’s assertions. While people may complain about the mud-slinging, according to Ulm, there is absolutely no data that shows it keeps people from hitting the voting booths on election day.

“The highest voter turnout was in 1992 during the reelection of George Bush, Sr.,” according to Ulm. “Anger drives turnout. The more conflict there is, the more voters turn out. The more contested and rougher elections are, the higher the voter turnout.”



Gene Ulm

Pollsters are finding the most “fundamentally unhappy” voters are residing in the Midwest. With manufacturing jobs vanishing, voters in the Midwest are registering a significantly more pessimistic tone than the national electorate.

Ulm said the economy is by far the most important issue to Wisconsin voters. “They are worried about their jobs, their future and that of their family,” he said. “With that, we see a concern about health care, especially cost.”

And who will Wisconsin support for the presidency in the fall? Pollsters and candidates alike are keeping a close watch on the industrial Midwest, which harbors the votes that are now seen as critical wins to both President Bush and John Kerry.

WHA 2004 Advocacy All-Star Award: David Olson

David Olson, president and CEO of Bay Area Medical Center in Marinette, is the recipient of the WHA 2004 Advocacy All-Star award. In presenting the award, WHA’s Eric Borgerding said Olson and his team goes “above and beyond” the daily responsibilities of running a hospital and goes the extra mile to advocate on behalf of all Wisconsin hospitals.

WHA Senior Vice President Eric Borgerding observed, “David’s efforts may appear as a ripple in little Marinette, but they are a tidal wave by the time they hit Madison-and for that, we are very appreciative.”

Olson is a member of WHA’s Board of Directors, is a member of the WHA Public Policy Council, serves on the WHA Advocacy Committee, and he played a key role in developing WHA’s health care reform proposal - Healthier Choices.

WHA 2004 Health Care Leadership Award: Rep. Curt Gielow

Still considered a freshman legislator, Rep. Curt Gielow (R-Mequon) has accomplishments that rival his upper classmates. Few legislators have ever made as significant an impact in their first term as Representative Gielow, especially in the area of health care. In recognition of his achievements and in appreciation for his efforts, Gielow received the WHA 2004 Health Care Leadership Award.

In his introduction of Gielow, Columbia-St. Mary’s President and CEO Leo Brideau said, “As a former hospital pharmacist, he knows what it is like to be ‘in the trenches’ of health care. As a former hospital administrator, he understands the unique challenges of operating today’s evolving, multi-faceted hospitals. And as the current owner of a medical executive search firm, he not only hears, but also understands when we sound the alarm on the impending physician shortage. Curt brings all of this experience and knowledge into health care policymaking.”



From left, Board Member Sue Polito, Board Chair Jeff Zeratsky, Olson, and Board member Jim Hodge



Leo Brideau, president and CEO, Columbia-St. Mary’s, Milwaukee and Rep. Curt Gielow

“We have a long history of working on a cooperative approach to problems in the Wisconsin legislature. The Medicaid budget is the most pressing issue we face. We have looked at budget deficits, one thing we need to look at is more comprehensive health care reform.”

Sen. Mary Panzer (R-West Bend)



Senate Majority Leader Mary Panzer

“Health care is not a partisan issue. It is really important to remember the big issue this election cycle will be health care. Make no mistake. The concern that we should have as a group is how it is going to look when we are done and how will it function. Is it affordable, available, and does it cover those who need coverage?”

Sen. Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton)



Senate Minority Leader Jon Erpenbach

“Hospital costs are not driving the health care increases. Hospital costs, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, rose about 5% in 2000, whereas other costs that same year, like pharmaceuticals, rose approximately 17%. So you are doing a good job. I am on the Assembly insurance committee and we are looking at coverage for businesses, elderly and uninsured. Families with low incomes are stressed and fearful about health care costs. My concern is that reforms...do not result in screening out people based on their ability to pay.”

Rep. Terese Berceau (D-Madison)



Rep. Terese Berceau

“If taxes are the #1 issue in Wisconsin, then health care is #1a. It will overtake taxes. There are not easy answers. That challenge will be perennial. The demographics show that 92 million Americans are in that population. We are at a point where technology has outpaced our ability to pay for it. Workforce shortages are coming up, which includes physicians. These challenges will be here for quite some time, and we must wrestle with them.”

Rep. Mike Huebsch (R-Onalaska)



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