Technology and Construction

Background

Medical science continues to advance, making possible treatments and procedures that improve the quality and safety of care that patients receive, while enabling them to attain or maintain a higher quality of life following treatment. Patients expect—and deserve—the best and most advanced treatments for disease and disability. Unlike other industries, advanced technology in health care does not always reduce the cost of care. Purchase of cutting edge technologies is by nature more expensive than maintaining the status quo in treating patients, but when faced with serious illness, patients seek out these services. In addition, patients and their families want these services close to home so they are not forced to leave their communities to obtain necessary care.

Construction of health care facilities is necessary to ensure that patients have access to services. Space constraints can severely limit a hospital's ability to respond to the need for care in its community. New services and technology often cannot be accommodated in antiquated, aging physical plants. Lower interest rates over the past few years have also led community hospital boards to pursue building projects that will have a life span well into the future. Hospitals, like homeowners, take advantage of low interest rates. Since these projects are amortized over many years, often decades, the incremental increase in cost to consumers for such facilities is little to nothing.

Issues

- Delivery of top-notch health care requires that health care professionals have access to the latest advances in technology in facilities to accommodate it. To remain competitive, health care organizations add services that enable their physicians, nurses and other professionals to offer the most recent courses of treatment in their facilities.
- Recruitment of health care professionals, which is a critical issue to hospitals, is severely hampered if physicians and nurses cannot utilize all their skills due to lack of technology. They want to offer their patients the best care possible, and often they make their decision on whether this is possible by evaluating the hospital or clinic where they will practice.

WHA Position

- The ability to renovate and build has a direct impact on a hospital's ability to continue to meet the increasing and ever more complex needs of its patients. The need for these services will increase as the population ages, medical science advances, and as hospitals in some areas must turn away ambulances due to overcrowding.
- Hard to recruit physicians, such as surgeons who depend on modern facilities, could migrate to other states. In addition, aging facilities sometimes have difficulty incorporating the latest evidence-based findings that show major improvements in patient safety are often gained by redesigning the patient care environment.
- A local hospital board evaluates the need for new facilities and renovations based on community need. These decisions are made a locally appointed board, which carefully accounts for the projected growth of the community and the ability of their community-based hospital to respond to those needs.

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Related Resources

- News release, April 15, 2002: Hospitals Unite in Opposition to Senate's Hospital Ban
  http://www.wha.org/newsCenter/pdf/nr4-15-02hospban.pdf
- News release, April 30, 2002: Plache Wants Hospital Ban to Face the "Wrecking Ball"
  http://www.wha.org/newsCenter/pdf/nr4-30-02plache.pdf
- News release, May 17, 2002: Governor and Gubernatorial Candidates Oppose Hospital Construction Ban
  http://www.wha.org/newsCenter/pdf/nr5-17-02hospban.pdf
- News release, May 21, 2002: Senate Negotiators Continue Targeting Community Hospitals
  http://www.wha.org/newsCenter/pdf/nr5-21-02senate.pdf
- News release, June 5, 2002: Poll Finds Residents Favor Local Control of Wisconsin Hospitals
  http://www.wha.org/newsCenter/pdf/nr6-5-02wisresidents.pdf
- News release, June 21, 2002: Hospital Association President Praises Conference Committee's Removal of Certificate of Need Provision
  http://www.wha.org/newsCenter/pdf/nr6-21-02con.pdf

Localize The Message

Be prepared to talk about:

- How your new building will impact patient care.

- New technology investments that will now be available close to home.
- Your board members' ties to community and business.
- How new facility will be amortized over many years, so impact on cost is negligible.