

COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

FEBRUARY 7, 2006

The annual 120 day session of the state legislature started the second week in January and will end in May. We have already seen some action and done some lobbying and testimony before two legislative committees. This year two bills have showed up in the legislature so far that would have impact on CAP members, Senate Bill 161 and House Bill 1170.

SB 161 was introduced by Sen. Steve Johnson of Ft. Collins. He was asked to carry this bill by the governor's office. The bill would eliminate all the licensing boards in the Division of Registrations, Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) and replace their functions with DORA staff and administration and the hiring of "experts". Senator Johnson thought this would be a good cost saving move, even though he was the Senate sponsor three years ago of the reenactment of the psychotherapy statute that called for continuation of the licensing boards and the state grievance board for unlicensed psychotherapists.

Our lobbyist, Bill Hanna, kept on top of the bill and Greg McHugh, CAP Board member and Legislative Chair, testified against the bill this past Monday, February 6th. He stated to the Senate State Affairs Committee that to eliminate the Grievance Board would remove consumer protection that existed in current mandated board membership of experienced psychotherapists. Sen. Johnson, upon seeing a last minute fiscal note on the projected costs of the bill decided that he would not continue the bill, but ask at a later meeting of the Committee to have it killed.

HB 1170 by Rep. Paul Weissmann of Boulder would allow for certain unlicensed health care practitioners and practitioners of the healing arts to be able to practice healing without having to be considered in violation of the Medical Practice Act as long as they did a disclosure statement to the patient/client. The bill was developed by coordinators at the state and national level of the Health Freedom Act, which has been passed into law with similar content in other states.

CAP's concern was that "healing arts" practitioners who are *also* actually doing psychotherapy without being in the state's data base, would misinterpret the bill (if passed and signed into law) as permission to not have to register in the data base with DORA. So we developed an amendment to specifically address that and to pointedly say that such healing arts practitioners shall not violate any law including that concerning the practice of psychotherapy in 12-43-101 CRS.

With our lobbyist's assistance, Rep. Weissman, has so far been very amenable to our amendment and those suggested by other groups and is in process of doing a rewrite of the bill to incorporate those concerns in a cohesive manner. Greg testified before the House Health and Human Services Committee on Feb 6 that we had no objection to consumers having such choice in health care services and that we hope that the committee would see the need to remind those practitioners through our amendment that if they are practicing psychotherapy, they need to comply with *that* law.

For more information contact:

Greg McHugh greg@gregmchugh.com 303 995 4276