Capitol News

March 7, 2020

Melissa Johnson, WSLHA Lobbyist

Not surprisingly, this week legislators were focused on the coronavirus. On Monday, Department of Health Secretary John Weisman briefed legislators on the state’s response to the coronavirus. Then, the House and Senate passed HB 2965, legislation that appropriates $100 million from the state’s rainy day account to fund state, local and tribal responses to the coronavirus.

The coronavirus may also have an impact on the state budget, as state forecasters are warning of a potential economic downturn. Budget negotiators will take this into account as they finalize the supplemental budget.

Amidst all of this, legislators had to turn their attention to voting on bills to meet yesterday’s 5pm cutoff deadline. This is the deadline for Senate bills to be out of the House and House bills to be out of the Senate. The Legislature is scheduled to adjourn on March 12th.

Our insurance priority bills passed the Legislature this week! Our prior authorization bill (SB 5887) was voted out of the House unanimously on Tuesday. Our health benefit manager bill (SB 5601) was voted out of the House unanimously yesterday. Both bills return to the Senate for approval of the House amendments on the bill. Since both bills have been agreed to by stakeholders, this concurrence vote in the Senate is expected to happen with no controversy.