13

Wyoming Health Care Commission Meeting
July 29, 2003
Cheyenne, Wyoming

The Legislature's Health Care Commission Subcommittee Report

Rep. Jerry Iskel

Legislature's Intent for Formation of the Commission

The Health Care Commission Subcommittee of the Joint Interim Labor, Health & Social Services Committee met here this morning briefly in order to address ourselves again to what role we should play with this Commission as you perform your statutory duties. Those present here today are Senator Scott, Co-Chairman of the Joint Interim Labor, Health & Social Services Committee, Senator Mike Massie and myself. Interim Committee Co-Chairman Representative Doug Osborn asked me to send his sincere regrets that he cannot attend this meeting, due to other conflicts out-of-state.

We all recognize the serious impact of the health care system crisis from which our Nation is reeling and within which we in Wyoming have our special part. Our portion of this crisis is a prototype of the whole, but, as we would expect, our experience has features peculiar to our state, including: density of population and distances to travel; our designation as a rural or, sometimes, "frontier" state; economies of scale; and, factors which can affect filling critical areas of health provider shortage.

We welcome this Health Care Commission, Chairman Muirhead. We salute each of you, and have great confidence in the role you will play in seeking ways to resolve this crisis. One of the intentions behind the Legislature's call for the commission emanates from the comprehensive nature of this health system crisis, truly a systems problem and therefore calling for focused attention on its multiple components. The multi-various parts of this are quite interlaced with one another. Each component must be isolated for study and at the same time seen for its relationship to the whole. This applies to such facets as the health care provider shortages, insurance, medical malpractice, costs of care, cost shifting, and on & on. The legislation embodied in House Bill 46, creating the commission in the Governor's office, is calling for a working body and a process to address the

inherent complexities. Frankly, it is a matter calling for much more attention than what a few committee members can effectively give.

As you are called to develop strategies to improve health care and to reduce related costs for Wyoming's citizens, thorough review must take place. Just such a cadre of persons as yourselves is needed; that is, persons across your membership having knowledge about and acquaintance with various portions of this problem, persons capable of efficacious work together, persons equipped in this venue to sort out and study, to seek focused testimony, and to organize and prioritize information.

Then, the Legislature expects to keep in touch with your work and, most importantly, receive your recommendations for what we can carry forth into our budgetary and statutory work.

We all must approach these matters with certain reality factors in mind. How much can be bitten off at one time? What are the budgetary constraints? These exist even for Wyoming in our unique and favorable situation within the national scene as a state able to have fiscal solvency without deep budgetary cuts achieved through a succession of special legislative sessions.

By the way, you very likely know that the successful work of two previous health care commissions of recent Wyoming history have prompted the legislature and others to again plug in this approach for what we are currently facing. You will study the pervasive effects of this crisis on provider resources, and most importantly, on what health care our citizens are able to receive. We all know people are hurting; we all have our own personal awareness of problems in the health care field. Many of us have fairly fixed positions on certain issues. Riveting examples proliferate in the stories we all hear, (and many we don't hear), of a stressed market-place cutting across the lives of most citizens in one way or another.

So, to summarize, regarding the intent of the Legislature---

> Creating the Wyoming Health Care Commission is in recognition of the impact of the national health care crisis, and Wyoming's part of that, on our citizens. It is to recognize the need for a well-organized approach to this crisis—a crisis which is comprehensive across the health care system and the parts of which are interlocked.

It is to say that successful outcome must be approached in the most thorough way, using a mechanism which has been seen in previous years to yield good results.

It is also to have a resource which will feed into well-considered & well-recommended legislative initiatives. The Commission can flesh out some of the ideas which a citizen legislature cannot so thoroughly or effectively address.

We applaud each of you for your willingness and motivation to contribute to the work of this Commission. The Legislature is not abdicating, but we wish to work with you in partnership, to continue conducting our own statutory and budget-related work, and to respect those recommendations we hear from you which we then can address in the legislative venue.

Health Care Legislation considered in 2003 Session

I would like to refer to some of the legislation from this year's session. At this point in your two-day meeting you have already heard about certain legislation from Representatives Ross and Simpson and from Senator Hanes, and others. So I do not want to repeat unnecessarily.

And obviously yesterday you have entered right into the facets of specifically medical malpractice and other health insurance and cost issues.

Senator Scott will then be talking with you about what we can look forward to together. In the words we hear them say in Congress I think it will be extremely beneficial for me to "yield" any extra time I have not used for you to hear from the Senate Chair of the Labor, Health & Social Services Committee and for you to have good opportunity for dialogue with Senator Scott.

Jerry Iekel, Representative, HD 29
Chairman, Health Care Commission Subcommittee