

Doctors Have a Voice in the Arizona Legislature

For the past six years, doctors have had an advocate and champion in the Arizona House of Representatives. State Representative Barbara Leff, now running for the state senate has proven herself by being a legislator who not only introduces pro doctor legislation, but also watches for and stops legislation that would be harmful to the medical community. Barbara understands the difficulties faced by doctors in private practice. Not only was she a medical social worker but also she is married to colorectal surgeon Edmund Leff, M.D. They have been involved in the Arizona medical community for over twenty-two years.

Barbara entered the world of politics because of her concern for patient care and physician autonomy. She and Ed were very concerned about the draconian provisions of the Clinton Health Care Plan. She volunteered to help Jon Kyl win his first Senate campaign because she knew Jon was committed to stopping this terrible assault on private medicine. Barbara decided to run for the State Legislature with the goal of solving the problems faced by physicians that could be addressed at the State level.

Barbara was the sponsor and author of HB2600 (see the following), the Managed Care Reform Act. The goal of this comprehensive legislation was to return health care decisions to the physician. A detailed summary of this landmark legislation can be found at www.barbaraleff.com.

Barbara's legislation was the first time the Legislature addressed the problem of how insurance companies paid physicians. It required the insurance companies to pay within thirty days or to pay within the parameters of the contract or they would have to pay interest. It also set out a mechanism to monitor companies who routinely pay late. Although this would not completely solve the problems we all face with insurance companies payment, it was the first time that the Department of Insurance was given responsibility to help the doctor deal with insurance companies who use unfair techniques to delay payment. Before this, the Insurance Department had no responsibility and no legislative authority to be involved at all. This was truly a breakthrough that would never have happened if we did not have a champion to push for reform.

Barbara has also been there to stop legislation that would be harmful to our community. Several years ago, a bill detrimental to doctors made it all the way through the Senate. The Bill said that all doctors would have to post a large sign in the waiting room stating "A list of all BOMEX complaints that have ever been filed against me is available to you at the front desk". The law would require the doctor to give that list to anyone who asked. As absurd as this was, it was actually on its way to becoming a law until Barbara intervened. She was the first to raise the red flag on this bill and had it assigned to her Commerce Committee so she could make sure the Bill would die.

Barbara stepped in again this year and killed another Bill that passed out of the Senate. This bill would have forced any specialty hospitals that opened to have a 24/7 emergency room. In other words, no specialty hospital would be able to survive. This was an

attempt by the Hospital Association to prevent doctors from having any freedom as to how and where they practice. Once again, Barbara was a key player in stopping this assault on our rights to control our own destinies.

It is not often that you have a legislator who truly understands the concerns of the medical community and the incredible burden put on physicians by both by Government and the managed care industry.

Barbara has been awarded the 2000 Public Service Award from ARMA as well as the 2000 Legislator of the year from the National Republican Legislators Association for her work on Managed Care Reform. We need to stand up and keep her in the legislature by assuring that she be re-elected to the legislature. Barbara is running for the State Senate in District 11. No one can ever be as great an advocate for physicians and medicine as Barbara.

We need Barbara in the Senate. She is truly our best chance for an effective voice in the Legislature. Whether you live in or outside district 11, a district comprised of former districts 18, 24, and 26, you can help spread the word, and contribute anyway you can. Keeping Barbara in the legislature is imperative for our future.

Who else knows the plight of today's physician better than the wife of one of our own? I have personally known Ed & Barbara for over twenty years and there is no one better to represent us as they "lead our lives." I urge you to back and vote for Barbara Leff for her victory will be huge for all of us.

See you next month.

Mark E. Baldree, M.D.
President

WHAT REPRESENTATIVE BARBARA LEFF'S HMO REFORM LEGISLATION DOES FOR YOU

- 1) HB 2600 makes sure that health care decisions are made by you and your doctor. Any denial of a doctor-prescribed treatment by your HMO plan must be made, in writing, by a medical director who is licensed to practice medicine in this state.
- 2) HB 2600 allows your doctor to get a prescription drug approved that has been determined to be the best drug for your particular condition.
- 3) HB 2600 gives you two months of refills for a currently prescribed prescription drug when your insurance company changes the drugs on its "approved" list (formulary). This gives you and your doctor time to make the change or get permission for you to stay on the drug.
- 4) HB 2600 gives you a faster appeals process when your health could be affected by waiting for a decision that needs pre-authorization by the HMO.
- 5) HB 2600 allows you to see a specialist for an extended period of time with a single referral from your doctor.
- 6) HB 2600 allows your doctor to fight for your rights without the fear of retaliation from the insurance company.
- 7) HB 2600 forbids health insurance plans from offering financial incentives to delay, deny, or limit the treatment you need.
- 8) HB 2600 allows you to continue to see your current doctor for a transitional period when your health insurance has changed, if you have a life-threatening condition, or if you are in your third trimester of pregnancy.
- 9) HB 2600 allows you to go to a chiropractor for the treatment of neck and back problems for a limited number of visits.
- 10) HB 2600 makes sure that any group that assumes a financial risk for the delivery of your health care is financially solvent.
- 11) HB 2600 makes sure that all claims for providers are paid in a timely manner or requires interest to be paid on the claims. By looking at patterns of late payments, this Bill provides a means to alert the D.O.I. of any possible financial problems of your health plan.
- 12) HB 2600 allows your doctor an added choice of drug therapies for the treatment of cancer.
- 13) HB 2600 allows you to sue your health care insurer for damages if that insurer has acted in bad faith.