

## Picking Up Where UW Left Off: The 2011 State of Reform Health Policy Conference

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Understanding the implications of federal health reform is a big task. Gathering intelligence on what is coming next at the state level is a full time job. Few health care executives have the time to dig into the details on reform – at either level, federal or state. However, many of them should be concerned about the implications of reform to their health care organization.

I consult with an array of health providers and organizations helping them to better grasp the nuance and context of how policy is made. So, I hear about the level of anxiety

that exists in the industry. Here is what they are saying.

From a physician leader: “The ground is shifting now 3x as fast as it was 12 months ago, but I’m not entirely sure if this is a mild tremor or a catastrophic earthquake.”

From a health plan executive: “Politicians in DC have shot themselves in the foot, but I’m really scared about what Olympia plans to do next. I’m afraid they will end up doing the system even more harm.”

On the policy side, state legislators are nervous, too. With general voter anxiety creating a topsy-turvy election cycle, and another \$4.5 billion deficit looming, folks know “change” is coming but few know exactly what that looks like.

From a Democrat in the House: “We know we need to ‘right size’ government, and we now know that the first dollar in the door must go to education. But, without new revenue, that pretty much eliminates state funded health care as we know it.”

From a Republican senator: “I used to think we needed to eliminate a bunch of this regulation in the health care marketplace, but I just don’t think that’s a reality any-

more. So, how do we craft very limited but highly effective regulation to protect patients in the health care marketplace?”

From 1985 to 2008, the University of Washington Health Legislative Conference brought together stakeholders from across the state to network and discuss current and potential health legislation. Attendees included health care providers, payers, consumers, public officials, lobbyists, and researchers. If you are reading Washington Healthcare News, you probably attended this conference and know the value it provided.

However, with the closing of that conference, there is no longer an independent, objective forum for the gathering of stakeholders from across the political spectrum. Some groups continue to put on good events, but admit to a clear philosophical viewpoint on policy matters. The Washington Policy Center and Washington Health Foundation events are two which continue to provide thoughtful opinion and information, but which offer a different approach from that of the UW regarding objectivity and policy analysis.

For that reason, a group of more than 20 policy and industry leaders

have come together as the Convening Panel for a new health policy conference picking up where the UW left off: the 2011 State of Reform Health Policy Conference.

Held January 5th, 2011, at the Hilton in SeaTac, the State of Reform Health Policy Conference will bring voices together from across the spectrum of politics, policy and providing care. The Convening Panel is a demonstration of that diversity, which you can see from some of the organizations represented there:

- AARP
- Community Health Plan of Washington
- Group Health Cooperative

- Health Care Authority
- Eli Lilly
- Washington Budget and Policy Center
- University of Washington
- Swedish Medical Center
- Premera
- United Healthcare
- SEIU 775
- Puget Sound Family Physicians
- Seattle Children's Hospital
- Ryther Child Center

You can see the full list of Convening Panel participants at [www.stateofreform.com](http://www.stateofreform.com).

This conference has only one pur-

pose: host an objective forum for the exchange of ideas and dialog around current and potential ideas for health policy. That will include policy leaders and political insiders. It will include health care providers, health care payers, and health care plans.

From administrators to researchers, the more diverse the set of conversation topics on health policy, the more likely you are to gather the business intelligence you need to lead your organization through reform.

Like the UW conference, this is the one health policy conference you must attend to really understand what's happening in health care and health policy today.

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