

Governor Signs SB 224

Unanimous approval of SB 224, Physician Assistant Modernization Act

By Deborah Herron, Vox Public Relations Public Affairs

After moving out of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, SB 224 was unanimously approved by the Senate and House chambers. The bill overhauls and modernizes the way that physician assistants are licensed in Oregon, as well as the process for practice agreements to be handled by the Oregon Medical Board. The bill changes the current practice, which Rep. Jean Cowan (D-Newport) was “unfortunately not able to declare (as) a conflict of interest.” She described the current process as being part of the reason her daughter-in-law could not get licensed in a timely manner and had to move across the country.

SB 224 “de-links” licensure from the practice agreement, allowing a PA to first get licensed then find employment. Furthermore, by establishing in statute the components required on the practice agreement, it enables PAs to practice at the top of their licensure. Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, the chief sponsor of the bill, lauded Oregon Society of Physician Assistants, OMA and Oregon Medical Board for coming to consensus, stating on the floor that “this is how all healthcare bills should happen and this consensus process and spirit should continue throughout rulemaking.”

Reps. Greenlick, Nathanson and Cowan urged their colleagues to vote yes speaking to “the incredibly important occupation and importance of the bill to enhance primary care throughout the state.”

Governor Kitzhaber signed the bill in late June and OSPA will turn its attention to working with the Oregon Medical Board and Oregon Medical Association on the rulemaking process to implement the legislation. The changes outlined in the bill become effective on January 1, 2012. [Click here](#) to read the full text of the bill.