

HIMSS

Fact Sheet

The HIT Agenda for Newly Elected Governors

Background

In 2007, healthcare information technology (HIT) reached a more than ever revered importance among state governments throughout the United States. With rising health care costs and competing budget pressures, states recognized HIT as a tool to transform the delivery of healthcare. Initiatives were underway among states to study the development of statewide electronic health information exchanges, foster the use of HIT among publicly funded health programs, as well as strengthen the interoperability of HIT applications among providers.

In 2008, three newly elected governors also have plans to transform healthcare through HIT. A reoccurring theme for these governors in their new administrations is to leverage publicly funded health programs, such as Medicaid and State Employees Health Benefits Programs, to foster the use of HIT.

New Governors for 2008

Governor-elect Bobby Jindal, Louisiana: With deep roots in Louisiana and federal health policy, Governor-elect Bobby Jindal (R) will be sworn in as Governor in January 17, 2008. Prior to becoming Governor, Bobby Jindal served for three years as the Louisiana 1st District's Representative to the U.S. House of Representatives. Bobby Jindal also served as Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as well as Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals.ⁱ As part of his action plan to develop a sustainable system of quality healthcare for all Louisianans, Bobby Jindal plans to commit public funding to harness HIT.

Specifically, Bobby Jindal plans to:

- Develop a coordinated electronic health record (EHR) infrastructure to improve the delivery and quality of healthcare.
- Improve efforts to apply federal grants from HHS for implementing EHRs in emergency departments. Such efforts would build upon existing initiatives underway within the state, such as the Louisiana Health Information Exchange to electronically transmit health records among providers and the LSU Health care Services Division working to automate patient records in its hospital emergency department.
- Consider the use of Medicaid funds for incentives among physicians to use EHRs.ⁱⁱ

Governor Haley Barbour, Mississippi: Haley Barbour (R) will be sworn in, for his second term, as Governor of Mississippi on January 13, 2008, with an agenda to continue in his efforts to better the health of all Mississippians. Haley Barbour was first elected

Governor of Mississippi in 2003, campaigning to improve the overall quality of life for all people in the state by improving education, employment, health, and communities.ⁱⁱⁱ As Governor, Haley Barbour orchestrated the “Healthy Mississippi Campaign” to promote disease management and improve the cost of healthcare. As part of the campaign, Governor Barbour mandated physical education in grades K-8th, promoted a statewide walking campaign, and implemented a worksite wellness program for state employees.^{iv}

For his second term as Governor, Haley Barbour plans to continue his Healthy Mississippi Campaign by establishing a “Mississippi Health Insurance Exchange” to supply employees with more health insurance choices and make it easier for employees to keep their health insurance when changing jobs; enroll all eligible children in the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP); increase the number of physicians in the state; and improve the quality of health care through the use of medical technology.^v

Governor Steve Beshear, Kentucky: As Governor of Kentucky, Steve Beshear (D) plans to continue his efforts in preparing the state for the future by promoting the use of “electronic health technologies” (eHealth) throughout the state. Governor Steve Beshear was sworn into office on December 11, 2007. Formerly serving as Kentucky’s Lieutenant Governor, as well as Attorney General and State Representative, Governor Beshear has a long history in Kentucky politics.^{vi} As Governor, Steve Beshear is committed to making affordable and quality healthcare for all Kentuckians. Governor Beshear believes the most important factor to help achieve this goal is to implement “21st Century eHealth” throughout the state.

To achieve “21st Century eHealth” in Kentucky, Governor Beshear plans to:

- Leverage the purchasing power of the state by encouraging the use of EHRs among providers that do business with any of the four health plans in the state.
- Develop a public-private non-profit fund for businesses and unions to invest in to help fund eHealth measures throughout the state.^{vii}

HIMSS Government Relations Comments

HIMSS Government Relations will continue to monitor HIT policy throughout the United States. For further information regarding HIT activity underway in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Kentucky, please access the HIMSS State Dashboard (<http://www.himss.org/StateDashboard/>) or contact HIMSS Office of State Government Relations at (703) 562 – 8800.

ⁱ “Growing-Up”. Bobby Jindal, Governor. Accessible at:

http://www.bobbyjindal.com/bobby/bobby_growingup.aspx. Accessed on January 6, 2008.

ⁱⁱ “Health Care Reform: Creating a Sustainable System of Quality Health Care”. Bobby Jindal, Governor. Accessible at: http://www.bobbyjindal.com/downloads/Jindal_Healthcare.pdf. Accessed on January 6, 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ “About Haley”. Haley Barbour, Governor. Accessible at: <http://www.haleybarbour.com/issues/healthy/>. Accessed on January 6, 2008.

^{iv} “Healthy Mississippi”. Haley Barbour, Governor. Accessible at: <http://www.haleybarbour.com/issues/healthy/>. Accessed on January 6, 2008.

^v “Agenda for Mississippi’s Future”. Haley Barbour, Governor. Accessible at:
<http://haleybarbour.com/future.html>. Accessed on January 6, 2008.

^{vi} “Meet the Governor”. Governor Steve Beshear. Accessible at: <http://governor.ky.gov/about/>. Accessed on January 6, 2008.

^{vii} “Keeping Kentuckians Healthy”. Steve Beshear.com. Accessible at:
<http://www.stevebeshear.com/campaign/node/348>. Accessed on January 6, 2008.