

What's Up at the Capitol

The 2021 Legislative Session began on Monday, January 11th, and there are already over 1,000 bills introduced. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic promises to shape much of this session, from policy items pursued to the way in which legislative business is conducted. Both chambers have adopted special rules to protect the health and safety of legislators, staff, and the public. Anyone wishing to enter the buildings will be required to wear a mask and have temperature checked. Visitors will still be allowed in but ONLY to participate in committee hearings or a prescheduled meeting with staff or legislators. To incorporate social distancing practices, committee rooms will have occupancy restrictions. Most committees are making it possible for the public to provide testimony remotely. It is a very different legislative session!

Senator Nancy Barto has introduced SB 1140 on behalf of AzDHA. It is nearly identical to last session's SB 1227, which failed to make it through the process due to the session's early end. It seeks to clarify that Interim Therapeutic Restorations (ITR) includes permanent and primary dentition, remove several unnecessary restrictions on Affiliated Practice Dental Hygienists (APDH), and clarify the conditions for root planing and local anesthesia by APDH among other technical corrections and clarifications. The bill passed out of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee on Wednesday, January 20th by a unanimous 8-0 vote. It will next go to Rules for approval.

To speed up the process, Representative Justin Wilmeth introduced HB 2547 in the House of Representatives. HB 2547 is identical to SB 1140 and it is awaiting committee assignment. By doing this, the two identical bills move concurrently through the process rather than sequentially.

Another bill of interest is SB 1013 also sponsored by Senator Barto which, if passed, will change when your license will need to be renewed. It states that licenses issued by the State Board of Dental Examiners expire 30 days after the licensee's birthday every third year, instead of on June 30 of every third year. If passed, it will go into effect January 1, 2022.

Dental Therapy Rulemaking Continues

As you may recall, the practice of dental therapy was authorized in AZ in 2018 but to become fully implemented, the AZ Board of Dental Examiners (BODEX) must adopt rules that create administrative law. Rulemaking began last summer and is continuing. With input from stakeholders including AzDHA, AzDA, and others, BODEX is writing rules pertaining to licensing fees, qualifications and procedures for licensure by credential, continuing dental education, and other rules that clarify aspects of dental therapy practice such as collaborative practice agreement. Once they have completed their work, there will be a period for public comment before sending the proposed rules off to the Governor's Regulatory Review Council for final approval. Audio of the most recent meeting of the Board Rules Advisory Group, held on January 22, 2021, can be found [HERE](#). Warning! The meeting was 3 hours long. Minutes will eventually be posted there as well. The next (and hopefully last) meeting is expected in February, date to be determined.