

July 8, 2016

Weekly Legislative Wrap-Up

State of the States



Just one day before the start of a second fiscal year without a budget, Governor Rauner [signed](#)

a stopgap measure that would fund the continuation of government services for the next six months and ensure schools can open their doors in the fall. The Governor and legislative leaders will still have to pass a full budget, which will likely include changes to the state's workers' compensation system, but budget talks will not resume until after the November election.



Late last week, the New Mexico Supreme Court [ruled](#) that the state's workers' compensation exemption

for farms and ranches was unconstitutional. The law had required coverage for laborers processing and packaging agricultural products, but not those in the field harvesting the products. Estimates suggest nearly 20,000 agricultural workers will now be eligible for coverage.



Last week, the Drug Enforcement Administration released the 2016 [National Heroin Threat Assessment Summary](#), finding that deaths due to synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, have increased 79% between 2013 and 2014.

As part of the Obama's ongoing efforts to curb the opioid epidemic, the administration [announced](#) they would ease restrictions on doctors treating heroin and opioid addicts, allowing them to treat more patients with a drug, buprenorphine, which helps ease withdrawal symptoms.



State of the States



Pennsylvania is facing a \$1.4 billion budget shortfall for 2016-2017 prompting Republican

House leaders to [propose](#) borrowing from the state's Workers' Compensation Insurance Fund, which currently has \$1.5 billion in assets. However, the Fund also carries nearly \$1.7 billion in long-term liability for injured workers, prompting Governor Wolf to reject the proposal.



The Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission issued its second-annual [report](#) on the

status of the state's workers' compensation system. The

report shows an increase in weekly compensation rates and claim filing rates between 2014 and 2015.



On Wednesday afternoon, a [proposed](#) class action lawsuit against California's state workers'

compensation system was filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court. The lawsuit claims that the state's WC system discriminates against women because the system is composed of predominantly male medical examiners and the guide relied on for determining level of disability is gender biased. Meanwhile, a [bill](#) aiming to reduce incidents of gender bias in WC has passed the California Assembly and is currently before the Senate.

Article of Interest

As the United States continues to address the opioid epidemic, doctors and patients still face [challenges](#) when seeking new methods for treating pain that don't include prescription drugs.

Where in the U.S.A. are Jayne & Danielle?

Jayne will be back in the home office next week and Danielle will be in Portland, Oregon for the National Conference of Insurance Legislators Summer Conference on Thursday and Friday.



Questions, Concerns, Suggestions? Let Us Know.

Jayne Cannava, Esq.
VP, Legal and Government Affairs
jcannava@iwpharmacy.com
www.iwpharmacy.com/about-iwp/government-affairs
978.809.2148

Danielle Jaffee, Esq.
Manager of Government Affairs
djaffee@iwpharmacy.com
www.iwpharmacy.com/about-iwp/government-affairs
978.770.8047

IWP

PO Box 338 Methuen, MA 01844

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