



Legislators earned average marks during last session

The Oklahoma Foundation for Consumer & Patient Rights released its annual legislative scorecard Sept. 30, and legislators needed a grading curve.

In a news conference at the state Capitol, Executive Director Jeff Raymond explained how legislators fared in protecting consumer and patient safety.

"I believe our society will be judged by how we treat the least among us — the poor, the sick, the elderly," Raymond said. "During the last session help for cancer patients, children with autism and nursing home residents failed to overcome powerful, selfish interests. The poor, the sick and the elderly continue to suffer because of it."

The scorecard tracks almost 30 bills important to Oklahomans' personal, financial and medical safety.

Legislator calls on state to investigate Google-Yahoo! deal

State Rep. Mike Thompson has called on Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson to investigate the proposed deal between Google and Yahoo! for search-engine advertising.

"This deal is in direct contradiction to the competition and innovation that drive the Internet and our economy," said Thompson, R-Oklahoma City. "Google is a major corporation. Like any other major corporation, Google believes its profits are paramount. That's fine until it comes at the expense of average citizens and consumers."

Other states and regulators are examining the deal, which has been the subject of hearings in the U.S. Senate and House.

More from the Web

Bankrate.com has an interesting list of the 14 useless insurance policies. They include perennial favorites such as flight insurance (your odds of dying on a flight, assuming you remember to give proof of your coverage to someone who isn't on the flight with you, are tiny) and policies to cover credit card payments if you become unemployed.

Although the choices are debatable in some cases, it's always good to evaluate whether you're spending your money wisely when the electronics store clerk asks you if you want an extended warranty with your new television or your credit card company sends you yet another solicitation to lighten your wallet.

Study finds doctors' fears unfounded

A new study has found few physicians are tried and/or sanctioned for improperly prescribing pain medications.

As doctors read about Drug Enforcement Administration arrests of doctors and medical board disciplinary actions or hear about them on the evening news, many worry about whether prescribing pain medications will jeopardize their livelihoods.

The answer, it seems, is no.

A study in the Sept. 9 issue of the journal *Pain Medicine* showed a tiny number of U.S. doctors was prosecuted or administratively sanctioned from 1998 to 2006 for improperly prescribing narcotic pain medications.

Over the eight-year period only about one in 1,000 practicing physicians was tried or sanctioned for this type of offense.

If you're in pain, your doctor shouldn't be afraid of prescribing drugs he or she believes will best help.

Gov't offers one-stop recall site

Keeping abreast of product recalls these days is a challenge.

The federal government has made the task a bit easier with its **www.recalls.gov** site, a repository of information on recalls and links to government agencies that oversee what we consume and use in our daily lives.

The site bills itself as a "one-stop shop" for U.S. government recalls.

Speaking of recalls, have you wondered what melamine is and why it's dangerous to your health?

According to the World Health Organization, more than 54,000 infants and young children have sought treatment for urinary tract problems, possible renal tube blockages and possible kidney stones related to melamine-contaminated dairy products and infant formula.

The FDA has said there is no threat from infant formula for sale in the United States.

Trusting health info on the Web

When it comes to health information online, trust is everything.

That's why a list from the Consumer and Patient Health Information Section of the Medical Library Association is so valuable. The group has put together the top 100 most reliable health Web sites.

Don't leave your health research to quacks or those with an agenda. Trust the sites the Medical Library Association recommends. After all, they're the ones who keep the information doctors turn to.

Message from the executive director

As I finish my third month on the job, I'm continually reminded of how much work is needed to ensure Oklahomans are aware of their rights as citizens and consumers and are educated about how to keep from being defrauded or abused.

I took over the Foundation to expand its reach and reputation as a group that would take a no-holds-barred approach to doing what's right, however unpopular it may be at times.

As we're making progress in this area, I hope you'll take notice of our policy work. The Foundation is working to contribute not just to the public debate about important issues but to the information that underpins the debate.

There's a definite need for a watchdog group in Oklahoma. I hope we represent everyone, not just those who agree with our views. We're here for those who don't, too.

We're all consumers. We're all patients. We're all Oklahomans.

Jeff Raymond, Executive Director

Help us stand up for consumer and patient rights

The Oklahoma Foundation for Consumer and Patient Rights takes on big industries and the politicians every day in legislatures, the courts and in the media. We also provide a number of resources for consumers to make informed decisions in the marketplace and as patients. The Foundation for Consumer and Patient Rights is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. We rely upon the support of people like you.

If you see the value in our research, education and advocacy, **please make a contribution today**. You can also donate by mail making a check payable to OKFCPR and mailing to PO Box 12714, Oklahoma City, OK 73157.