

PERSPECTIVE

Promoting Health Care Transparency and Competition



Second Hospital Now Out of Reach?

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By Kevin T. Kavanagh, MD

I have been approached by many on the streets asking what has happened to the second hospital in Pulaski County. A simple answer is that we needed a regulation change to build one. Frankfort changed the regulations.

On January 31, 2006, the Kentucky Cabinet of Health and Family Services enacted new regulations for the granting of a certificate of need (CON) to build a new hospital. But instead of making it easier to obtain a CON for a second hospital, they made it harder.

The new Kentucky regulations for building an additional hospital in any county have been severely tightened and have the effect of preventing an additional hospital from being built in Pulaski County and probably in any other part of the State.

For example: In the initial proposal an additional hospital could be built in a county if there was a documented history of uncorrected quality control problems which threaten the life, health and safety of the hospital's patients. In the final adopted proposal this criteria was eliminated. What is required to obtain a CON based upon quality is the final loss of Medicaid and Medicare certification, loss of state licensure or loss of accreditation. These are very rare events to happen at any institution. But the criteria must also be met by all hospitals in all surrounding counties. That's right! The hospitals in Somerset, Monticello, Russell Springs, London and

Corbin would all have to have final loss of accreditation, Medicaid/Medicare Certification or licensure before a CON could be issued.

There are other criteria, but these too have correspondingly high fences to be met. All criteria have been tightened and all must be met at the same time by all hospitals in the surrounding counties.

While the adopted regulations have the effect of preventing additional hospitals from being constructed, according to the Lexington Herald Leader (March 18, 2006) the new CON regulations make it easier for existing hospitals to expand and relocate. Marymount Hospital in Laurel County has taken advantage of this and announced it intends to expand by 74 acute care beds to be added to their current 89 bed facility. Marymount is also planning to relocate and build a new and expanded medical center. The word on the street is that one of the locations of interest is on the Pulaski side of interstate 75 on Highway 80.

In an editorial published in July, I predicted that expanding our county's medical campus by adding another major hospital would also help the Somerset Community College to grow. It should be noted that the construction of the planned medical center in Laurel County is associated with a 14 million dollar expansion of the Somerset Community College to construct a building to house a nursing school and allied

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Summary
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**New CON
Regulations
Will Prevent
Somerset from
Obtaining a
Second Hospital**

**Health Watch
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**Promoting Healthcare
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Affordability**

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Health Watch USA

Promoting Healthcare Quality, Access & Affordability

Laurel County is relocating and expanding their hospital. They are building a new regional medical center.

This should put at rest any debate on whether the region can support a new medical center

health program. However, this expansion will not take place in Pulaski County but will be built in Laurel County.

These events should put to rest any debate regarding whether or not our region can provide additional staff and nurses to support an additional medical center. It can. However, it looks like it is going to be build in Laurel County instead of Pulaski County. And guess what, Laurel

County residents are not having to pay higher taxes to build it.

For More information relating to this topic go to www.healthwatchusa.org website and select the “What’s New” screen button.

Contact Information

Kevin T. Kavanagh, MD
Board Chairman Health Watch USA
3396 Woodhaven Dr
Somerset, KY 42503

www.healthwatchusa.org

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Authors are available for interviews by contacting Health Watch USA

Kevin T. Kavanagh, MD is a Somerset Based Physician and Chairman of the Board of Health Watch USA.

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Email Address: contact-mail@healthwatchusa.org

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