

NJP: We'd like to begin by congratulating you on the opening of the new Greystone Park psychiatric hospital (today/yesterday). We know that this has been a project near and dear to your heart. Do you have any thoughts that you would like to pass along to New Jersey physicians on this significant event?

Senator Codey: All New Jerseyans should be happy that our state is continuing ongoing efforts to make mental illness treatment a priority. The Greystone opening should be seen as an extension of that commitment. While the legislature recognizes there is much more work to be done, we are making progress. I am dedicated to the task of making mental health services more accessible and more mental health beds available to those in need of this vital care. Physicians can be assured they have a supportive partner in the legislature that will assist them in meeting the demands of their profession.

NJP: There has been much discussion about Horizon BC/BS converting to a for profit corporation. We understand that this could bring billions of dollars into New Jersey's coffers, and help provide healthcare to the uninsured. But there is also concern that Horizon could be bought up by one of the other large healthcare insurers, creating a mega-insurer that could monopolize healthcare, increase the cost of health insurance, reduce competition, further reduce physician compensation, and stifle competition. How can we make it work?

Senator Codey: I have been very consistent in my view on this topic. It is simple, if the conversion is good for the State then we should pursue it, if not, then we should not go down that path. To find this out, we need to let the process play out so a full vetting takes place. How will this effect the State's insured? What revenue will the State realize? If we find that the State's insured would be well protected and the State can gain significant revenue, then yes we should probably go down that road. If we see this will bring harm to the State's insured residents then this is may not be worth it.

NJP: There is an amendment pending to the Codey Act which would address the issue of physician owners of surgi-centers ability to continue to refer patients to those centers. What is the status of that amendment? Will it pass in its existing form?

Senator Codey: The status of the bill at the present time is that discussions are on-going with stakeholders. All those involved have had the chance to reach out and let their views be known. It does stand to chance that legislative action will be taken on this bill in the Fall.

NJP: There has been much criticism in the press of the NJ Board of Medical Examiners for not aggressively pursuing "bad doctors". One suggestion is to move the Board to the Department of Health, while leaving the prosecution of physicians within the Division of Consumer Affairs. Would you be in favor of such a move?

Senator Codey: I don't think moving the Board to the Dep. of Health while leaving the prosecution within the Division of Consumer Affairs is the answer. I would like to see this issue

addressed within the Division. The Board for years worked well, but there have been cuts to the investigative staff which has led to a reduction in investigations. The issue of this staff shortage should be addressed and the Board should remain where it is.

NJP: Senator Codey, thank you for the time.

Senator Codey: My pleasure.