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# Self-Insurer Lobbyists See Movement Legislatively on Faster WC Settlements

Jeremy Estenson and Peter Thrane, who represent the Minnesota Self-Insurers Association at the capitol, are optimistic that the current session could lead to a legislative change that should increase efficiency in the adjudication of workers' compensation claims.

In 2009 the legislatively appointed Workers Compensation Advisory Council (comprised mainly of business and labor leaders) came up with a plan to expedite the resolution of workers' compensation claims. The main intent was to avoid unnecessary duplication of settlement conferences at the Department of Labor and Industry and the Office of Administrative Hearings. One change, for example, called for designating DOLI as more of a first-tier call resource for claimants.

The transition, however, did not work quite as smoothly as anticipated. Consequently, Chief Administrative Law Judge Ray Krause formulated changes designed to better streamline the process. The WCAC, whose consensus proposals are usually approved by legislators, is currently fine tuning Krause's changes, which will best be achieved legislatively rather than administratively, Thrane explained. Estenson added that once the council's changes are implemented, he expects a significantly improved process. The lobbyists do not anticipate much progress in two other crucial workers' compensation-related issues of medical cost containment and vocational rehabilitation because the main players, business and labor, have not yet achieved accord. ■