

March 30, 2012

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NEXT WEEK IN WASHINGTON...

- * The House and Senate will be in recess until April 19.

1. AAFP CALLS ON HOUSE TO FUND TITLE VII, OTHER VITAL PROGRAMS

The AAFP submitted written [testimony](#) to the House Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee which will determine the funding level for Title VII Section 747—primary care training grants and other programs and agencies which are priorities for family medicine. Similar testimony will be submitted next month to the Senate Subcommittee. The AAFP joined the Council of Academic Family Medicine and other supporters of primary care medicine training grants in a [letter](#) to the House and Senate calling for \$71 million for the Title VII Section 747 programs in order to allow for a new grant round in FY 2013. In addition, the AAFP signed coalition letters in support of [an appropriation of \\$7 billion for HRSA](#) and [recommending an appropriation of \\$400 million for AHRQ](#).

2. AAFP MEMBERS RESPOND TO APPROPRIATIONS ALERTS

This week, AAFP circulated two “Speak Out” alerts, both of which targeted the Senate Appropriations Committee. Our students asked that \$280 million be allocated for Title VII funding -- 166 students sent 338 letters to their Senators. In addition, a select group of practicing family physicians asked the committee to fund the NASPER program, which helps states coordinate their registries of patients who seek prescriptions for opioids and other restricted pharmaceuticals. With an extremely short turn-around time, 114 practicing physicians sent 232 letters to their Senators.

3. BUDGET RESOLUTION CLEARS THE HOUSE

The House of Representatives on Thursday, March 29 approved a \$3.5 trillion budget resolution on a 228 to 191 vote. The proposal, developed by House Budget Committee Chairman, Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI), seeks to cut tax rates and alter the Medicare program to curb costs of future retirees. The plan would cut \$5.3 trillion from federal spending over the next decade -- entirely

through deep cuts in entitlement and non-defense spending which funds the AAFP priority programs. The AAFP and over 900 organizations interested in domestic discretionary programs sent a [letter](#) to Congress urging spending allocations based on reasonable determinations of need and effectiveness, rather than across the board reductions.

The Senate will use the higher spending limits called for in the *Budget Control Act* enacted last August. This disparity between House and Senate budget goals will hinder negotiating the annual appropriations process again this year.

4. FAMMEDPAC SUPPORTS KEY LEGISLATORS AND OPEN SEAT CANDIDATE

FamMedPAC supported three important Congressional legislators this week, highlighting AAFP's call for a permanent fix to the Medicare physician fee schedule and urging continued funding for Title VII primary care education funding programs. In addition, the PAC donated to the campaign of a first-time candidate running in an open seat in California. The PAC supported the following candidates:

- **Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI)**, who chairs the House Energy and Commerce Committee.
- **Assemblyman Jared Huffman (D-CA)** is a candidate for the open U. S. House seat in California's 2nd district. Mr. Huffman serves in the California state legislature and has worked effectively with the California AFP.
- **Rep. Ed Towns (D-NY)**, who is a member of the Health Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Dr. Mark Krotowski, an AAFP member from New York, and the Key Contact for Rep. Towns, delivered the PAC donation and attended a local reception for the Congressman in his district.
- **Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA)**, who is a psychologist and a member of the Health Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.
- **Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA)**, who is on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

5. AAFP SUPPORTS MORE NUTRITIOUS NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS

The AAFP responded to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) proposed National School Lunch Program in a letter sent March 22. In the response, the AAFP supported the USDA's proposals to improve school nutrition programs accessed through state education agencies. The AAFP urged the USDA to offer strong incentives for school nutrition providers to replace items that have little or no nutritional value with healthy and ideally locally produced alternatives. As further policy on the National School Lunch Program develops, the AAFP encouraged the USDA to consult the AAFP's policy on Healthy Eating in Schools.

6. REGULATORY BRIEFS:

- On March 26, the CMS Innovation Center announced that CMS has received nearly 3,000 applications for the [Health Care Innovation Challenge](#). The initiative will award up to \$1 billion in grants over three years to projects that identify and test promising new payment and care delivery models for Medicare, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program. Due to the volume of applications, CMS announced final determinations of awards will not be possible by the anticipated March 30, 2012, but will be delayed by several weeks.
- On March 29, CMS announced awards to Maine's Community Health Options, Oregon's Health CO-OP, and Consumers' Choice Health Insurance Company in South Carolina to form Consumer Operated and Oriented Plans ([CO-OPs](#)). This concluded the first round of CO-OP awards. The second round of applications was due on January 3, 2012. There will be subsequent quarterly application deadlines through December 31, 2012. Awards will be announced on a rolling basis. Seven organizations were awarded loans on February 21, 2012 to offer coverage in eight states.

- On April 10-11 in Washington, DC, HHS and the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR) are hosting the *2012 National Health Promotion Summit: Prevention. Promotion. Progress.*
- CMS recently reopened the Quality Reporting Communication Support Page to allow physicians the opportunity to request a significant hardship exemption for the 2013 Electronic Prescribing (eRx) payment adjustment. CMS will accept hardship exemption requests through June 30, 2012. CMS recommends their educational [article](#) for further details. Read a related *AAFP News Now* [article](#).

7. TWO FAMILY PHYSICIANS STEP DOWN FROM STATE ADMINISTRATIONS

On Monday, March 19, **Dan Derksen, MD** [resigned](#) as director of the New Mexico Office of Health Care Reform. Dr. Derksen, who successfully shepherded the state's Level One Health Insurance Exchange grant application, cited differences within Governor Susana Martinez's (R) administration over the state's approach to health policy and implementation of federal health reform. One week later, Alabama's Medicaid director, **R. Bob Mullins, MD**, offered his [resignation](#) to Governor Robert Bentley, MD (R), a retired dermatologist. Dr. Mullins noted that, given the state's fiscal condition, a different skill set is necessary to guide Medicaid through ongoing budget issues.

8. ILLINOIS AFP FIGHTS FOR CLEAN INDOOR AIR, PUSHES FOR FAMILY MEDICINE

The **Illinois AFP** successfully beat back attempts to exempt casinos from the Smoke Free Illinois Law. In addition, the IAFP successfully blocked a bill to allow municipalities to issue a "smoking license" to bars ([HB 1310](#)). Currently, the chapter is pursuing legislation that would increase taxes on other tobacco products and "roll your own" cigarette machines.

The chapter opposes two bills, [HB 4478](#) and [SB 2821](#), which would give physical therapists direct access without referral. These bills will be held and discussed by the legislature over the summer. IAFP also opposes [HB 5105](#) and [HB 5823](#). The former would require that a supervising physician determine the number of physician assistants under his/her supervision on the condition that the physician is able to provide adequate supervision as outlined in the written supervision agreement. The latter would repeal the right to pursue collection of reasonable charges for services to an injured person by limiting the amount of any lien to a reimbursement rate established by the injured party's health insurance company.

9. WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE CLOSES RAUCOUS SESSION

Despite unusually heated politics during the General Assembly's regular two-year legislative session, as well as special budget session, the **Wisconsin AFP** racked up several significant victories. Among WAFP-supported bills signed into law were:

- [Special Session SB 1](#), known as the Quality Improvement Act (QIA), enhances patient safety and health care quality improvement efforts and makes much-needed upgrades to the state's peer review laws that allow health care providers to improve current practices;
- [AB 93](#), which prohibits adults from purchasing other tobacco products (e.g., snuff; cigars; etc.) for minors and prohibits the sale of nicotine products to minors;
- [AB 259](#), which requires the state to develop educational materials about the risk of head injuries in youth athletics and requires a youth athlete to be removed from competition if he or she shows signs or symptoms of a concussion;
- [SB 317](#), which allows schedule II drugs to be dispensed with an electronic prescription during the normal course of business; and,
- [SB 464](#); which prohibits credentialing boards at the WI Department of Safety and Professional Services (including the Medical Examining Board) from requiring applicants for a professional license to submit a copy of their fingerprints.