

September 27, 2013

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NEXT WEEK IN WASHINGTON...

* On October 2, the Senate HELP Committee will mark up draft bills reauthorizing the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education program.

1. CONGRESS OF DELEGATES ELECTS NEW LEADERS, CONTACTS US CONGRESS

Robert Wergin, MD of Milford, Nebraska, was chosen this week at the Congress of Delegates meeting as AAFP's president-elect and Reid Blackwelder, MD and Jeffrey Cain, MD were installed as the President and Board Chairman, respectively. The AAFP's three presidents as they are known will be in Washington, DC early next month to meet with legislators and key health policy leaders.

Other leadership positions announced at the Congress include Speaker of the Congress – John Meigs Jr., MD; Vice Speaker – Javette Orgain, MD, MPH; Directors – Jack Chou, MD; Robert Lee, MD; and Michael Munger, MD; new physician board member – Kisha Davis, MD; resident board member – Kimberly Becher, MD and student board member – B. Tate Hinkle.

On Friday, September 20, AAFP members attending the 2013 Congress of Delegates received an email asking them to speak out on AAFP's top 3 issues which resulted in 78 grassroots advocacy messages being sent to federal legislators. This quarter, 441 grassroots messages were sent to Congress on both AAFP's top 3 issues, and the newly developed "tier 2" issues.

2. SENATE APPROVES AMENDED SHORT-TERM SPENDING BILL

The Senate passed an amended stop-gap funding measure on Friday, September 27 by a vote of 54 to 44. The amended Continuing Resolution (HJ Res 59) authorizes appropriations through November 14 rather than through December 15 as the House-passed version had and does not include the provision prohibiting the expenditure of funds authorized by the *Affordable Care Act* (ACA). The House is unlikely to accept the Senate version, and this impasse increases the chances of a government shutdown when the new fiscal year begins on October 1.

AAFP staff heard from Senate Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) about her plan to amend the House-passed CR with a shorter CR in order to facilitate an omnibus spending bill which replaces the *Budget Control Act* sequester cuts for two years by leaving enough time to negotiate a better spending plan.

3. HOUSE GOP THREATENS TO DELAY ACA WITH DEBT CEILING MEASURE

U.S. Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew told Congress on September 25 that Treasury's ability to borrow funds will be exhausted October 17. Congress needs to pass legislation to extend the government's borrowing authority in order to avoid a first-ever default.

House Republican leaders are said to be struggling to secure the votes on Thursday for a debt-ceiling measure which would delay the implementation of "Obamacare" and include other partisan legislative priorities. However, some conservatives oppose the draft bill as lacking specific spending cuts and failing to take on entitlement reform. The White House insists that Congress must raise the debt ceiling without conditions.

4. FamMedPAC REACHES SENIOR APPROPRIATORS IN DC THIS WEEK

This week FamMedPAC supported events for the following legislators in Washington, DC:

- **Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)**, who chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee and has long supported the Title VII health professions training grant programs.
- **Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID)** a member of the Labor-HHS Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee who has supported Title VII.

5. PRIMARY CARE REDUCES UNNECESSARY EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on September 26 hosted a briefing to highlight strategies to reduce unnecessary emergency department visits. Pilot programs in Detroit, MI, Milwaukee, WI, and Oregon are using toolkits, health information, and claims data to connect patients with avoidable emergency department visits to primary care physicians. The Detroit pilot program decreased emergency department visits from an average of 49.2 visits per year to 7.9 visits per year, while the Milwaukee program saw a 44% decrease in emergency department utilization for patients who visited a primary care physician.