

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY

A Report to the Board of Directors

March 30, 2007

Please note: Congress has adjourned, with the Senate returning on Tuesday, April 10 and the House reconvening on Monday, April 16.

IN THIS REPORT...

1. Standardized Contract Bill Approved in Colorado
2. House Budget Increases Funding for Health Care
3. Senate Agrees to Supplemental Appropriations Bill
4. *Stroke Treatment and Ongoing Prevention Act* Passes House
5. *National Breast and Cervical Cancer Detection Act* passed by House and Senate
6. House and Senate pass *Trauma Care Systems Planning and Development Act*
7. Grassroots Advocacy

1. COLORADO LEGISLATURE APPROVES STANDARDIZED CONTRACT

On Tuesday, March 27, the Senate of Colorado approved the *Fairness and Transparency in Managed Care Contracting Act*. The bill is awaiting the Governor's signature. This bill, the first of its kind in contracting, will

- create standardized contract language between health insurers and physicians;
- require payers to disclose payment terms in plain language;
- mandate that payers give notice of proposed contract changes; and
- prohibit payers from requiring physician groups to accept "all products" clauses in contracts.

The bill will serve as sample legislation for other states interested in pursuing transparency in contracting.

2. HOUSE PASSES FY 2008 BUDGET

On Thursday, March 29, the House passed the nearly \$3 trillion budget resolution for fiscal year 2008 on a largely party-line vote of 216 to 210. The budget resolution proposes a \$1.1 trillion cap on discretionary spending, about \$25 billion more than President Bush had sought, or enough to allow inflationary increases in most programs, plus double-digit increases in education and veterans' benefits. It includes a Medicare "reserve fund" of an unspecified amount to address the pending cuts in physician payments. It also provides for an increase in spending for domestic health programs of \$2.148 billion over FY 2007 (4.1 percent). The House leadership hopes to reconcile their budget resolution with that of the Senate's soon after they reconvene in mid-April.

3. FY 2007 SPENDING BILL PASSES SENATE

A sharply-divided Senate passed the fiscal year 2007 Supplemental Appropriations bill by a vote of 51 to 47. Principally designed to pay the current bills for the military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the bill also would fund HHS pandemic flu activities, the State Children Health Insurance Program shortfall and veterans' health care programs. The

President has promised to veto this or any bill that calls for troop withdrawal from Iraq, and the Democrats likely will not be able to override his veto.

4. STROKE TREATMENT & ONGOING PREVENTION ACT PASSED BY HOUSE

On Tuesday, March 27, the House passed the *Stroke Treatment and Ongoing Prevention Act* (HR 477) introduced by Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA). The bill would direct the Health Resources and Services Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to administer several programs related to education, prevention, and treatment of stroke and to encourage telemedicine. The bill, passed by voice vote, goes to the Senate for action.

5. BREAST & CERVICAL CANCER EARLY DETECTION REAUTHORIZED

Legislation to reauthorize the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, first enacted in 1991, passed the House Tuesday by voice vote. The measure, HR 1132, sponsored by Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), would reauthorize programs for subsidized mammography exams, Pap tests and other screenings. The program currently screens fewer than 20 percent of eligible women. H.R. 1132 also was passed by the Senate and now goes to the President for his signature.

6. HOUSE PASSES TRAUMA CARE SYSTEMS ACT

The Trauma Care Systems Planning and Development Act (H.R. 727), introduced by Rep. Gene Green (D-TX), passed the House Tuesday, March 27, by voice vote. It would authorize several emergency services and trauma care programs administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration, including grants and cooperative agreements to assist states in the improvement and development of trauma care systems and emergency care residency training programs. H.R. 727 passed the Senate without amendment by unanimous consent. The President is expected to sign it.

7. GRASSROOTS ACTIVITIES

The Grassroots Advocacy Specialist has begun working in the Division and is currently in the process of reorganizing the Key Contact system and working on the Key Contact portion of the upcoming Family Medicine Congressional Conference.