



GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY

AAFP Division of Government Relations — 2021 Massachusetts Avenue, NW — Washington, DC 20036

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Note: The House of Representatives' schedule for this week was cut short by the federal Columbus Day holiday and the funeral of the late Congresswoman Jo Ann Davis (R-VA). The Senate was not scheduled to be in session this week.

1. FAMILY PHYSICIAN AT CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PRESS EVENT

Rep. Dennis Moore (D-KS) held a press conference in Kansas City, Kansas at Children's Mercy West/The Cordell Meeks, Jr. Clinic to discuss the upcoming Congressional vote to override the President's veto of the *Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act* (H.R. 976), which would reauthorize the States' Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Rep. Moore was joined by several representatives from the health care field, including Dr. Michael Kennedy, President of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians.

2. CALENDAR AND CONFLICT SLOW APPROPRIATIONS' PROGRESS

Two weeks into the 2008 federal fiscal year, none of the twelve annual appropriations bills have been enacted. The not-unprecedented delay has been caused by a lack of consensus on overall spending, disagreement over particular spending priorities and scheduling.

The leadership has announced that, as of next week, the Senate will begin consideration of the appropriations bills for FY2008. The Appropriations Committee has approved a Labor-HHS-Education spending bill that would allocate \$23 billion more than the President requested. President Bush has threatened to veto bills that exceed his request which could lead to shutting down some federal departments and agencies. Democrats have been comparing the \$23 billion in added appropriations and the \$35 billion expansion of a children's health insurance program with the White House's FY 2008 request for funding the war in Iraq of nearly \$200 billion. Meanwhile, Congressional Republicans have said vetoes of spending bills will reestablish the GOP's reputation for fiscal discipline.

3. AAFP MEMBERS CONTACT CONGRESS ABOUT CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE

SCHIP Grassroots

This week the AAFP called on members to contact their Representatives about their vote on compromise SCHIP legislation and urge them to override the President's veto. As of October 12, over 800 messages have been sent to Congress.

Grassroots Continue to Grow

As of October 12, AAFP has identified Key Contacts for 424 of the 536 Congressional legislators (79%).

Chamber	Key Contacts	Target (# of legislators)
Senate	96 (96%)	100
Senate Leadership & Key Committees	62 (93%)	66
House	328 (75%)	436 (including DC)
House Leadership & Key Committees	140 (80%)	174

Government Relations staff launched the new Advocacy Action Team at Scientific Assembly and recruited the first 20 family physicians to join the fight for family medicine.

4. ILLINOIS STATE SENATOR SPONSORS MEDICAL HOME RESOLUTION

Government relations staff working in collaboration with the Illinois Academy have secured the sponsorship of Sen. Mattie Hunter (D-IL) on a resolution calling for states to support medical home pilot programs. The resolution will be presented at the Council of State Governments annual meeting in Oklahoma City, November 10-13. AAFP CGA Chair, Steve Crawford, MD, will represent the AAFP at the Health Policy Task Force, the same group that will hear and vote on the resolution.

5. OF INTEREST TO FAMILY PHYSICIANS...

- *House Subcommittee Approves Mental Health Parity Measure*
On Wednesday, the Health Subcommittee approved the *Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act* (HR 1424) by voice vote setting it up for consideration by the full House Energy and Commerce panel. The Subcommittee's Democrats defeated several Republican amendments that would have made the bill more like legislation the Senate passed last month (S 558). Both bills would require health insurers that offer mental health benefits as part of an insurance plan to make them equal to traditional medical and surgical benefits. The Senate bill, which has the support of business and industry, is less prescriptive in what it would require insurers to cover. The House bill, sponsored by Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) has a broader definition of what constitutes mental illness and an earlier implementation requirement. The full Energy and Commerce Committee may act on the bill next week.