

October 18, 2013

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1. Debt Crisis Averted, Government Reopened, Long-Term Budget Negotiations Expected
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3. Health Insurance Marketplaces Struggle to Enroll the Uninsured

NEXT WEEK IN WASHINGTON...

* On October 24, the House Energy and Commerce Committee will hold a hearing titled "PPACA Implementation Failures: Didn't Know or Didn't Disclose?"

1. DEBT LIMIT AND SHUTDOWN RESOLVED, LONG-TERM BUDGET TALKS AHEAD

Following a 16-day government shutdown, President Obama signed into law a bipartisan deal passed by Congress to reopen the government and raise the debt ceiling early on Thursday, October 17. The Senate approved the measure (HR 2775) by a vote of 81-18; the House approved it on a vote of 285-144. The deal provides funding for federal agencies through January 15, raises the debt limit through February 7 and postpones the fight over taxes and entitlements, including Medicare and Medicaid.

The AAFP [called](#) the deal a "brief reprieve for elderly and disabled Medicare patients and the military families who depend on TRICARE for health coverage" and urged Congress to ensure access to physician services by repealing the Medicare sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula.

House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Senate Budget Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray (D-WA) on Thursday, October 17, will co-chair a House-Senate special committee to resolve the fiscal year 2014 budget issues by December 13. The House and Senate are sharply divided on the level of discretionary spending for FY 2014 which this budget committee will try to resolve. Republicans are expected to insist on preserving the \$967 billion discretionary spending level set by the *Budget Control Act* (PL 112-25). Democrats are likely to demand new tax revenue to allow for higher spending levels.

On October 14, AAFP sent a grassroots action alert that asked members to urge their legislators to raise the debt ceiling and continue to work towards a solution for the SGR formula. The response was strong – 633 members sent 2,582 letters to legislators in Congress.

2. FEDERAL OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIODS CONTINUE

As a reminder, the [Medicare open enrollment period](#) for beneficiaries is October 15 through December 7, 2013. Separately, the open enrollment period for the [new Health Insurance Marketplaces](#) is October 1 through March 31, 2014 and coverage can start January 1, 2014.

3. HEALTH INSURANCE MARKETPLACE ENROLLMENT UPDATE

On Thursday, October 17 and Friday, October 18, America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP)

hosted the 2013 State Issues Conference, which paid special attention to health insurance marketplace implementation. State marketplace officials from Louisiana, Minnesota, and New York provided updates on enrollment in their health insurance marketplaces. While states have received thousands of applicants, there are very few in which consumers have successfully completed the entire process and obtained insurance. The officials were quick to note that they expect this to change and that many more consumers will obtain coverage by the end of 2013.

Speakers from Washington DC and Iowa also provided an overview of state innovations in Medicaid and CHIP programs. DC is in the process of integrating all Health and Human Services systems to streamline applications and program administration. Iowa has implemented an initiative to become the healthiest state. The state is supporting this effort by creating premium contribution requirements that may be waived if consumers complete a health assessment and an annual physical. The state is also emphasizing public health initiatives to bring down costs and improve health in its Medicaid population.

Dan Crippen, the Executive Director of the National Governors Association (NGA), discussed how the NGA is partnering with the AMA to incorporate leadership training into medical school curriculum to prepare physicians to lead health care teams.