

## Capitol News!

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Dear NASHIA Member,

Welcome to *Capitol News*, Vol.8, Issue 15, which you receive as a member of NASHIA. In this issue you will find information regarding the federal budget and appropriations, as well as other legislation. Two weeks ago, NASHIA distributed a survey to State lead agency contacts to obtain input with regard to the TBI Act reauthorization legislation that will be introduced next year. If you received the survey and have not yet completed it, please do so. We value your suggestions and recommendations. Meanwhile, past issues of *Capitol News*, Congressional testimony, letters and other pertinent information on public policy are available on the NASHIA website at [www.nashia.org](http://www.nashia.org).

### This Week in Congress

Both the House and Senate are in recess this week. Yesterday, it was announced that the Congressional Super Committee failed to reach an agreement on deficit reduction recommendations by the Nov. 23 deadline as charged by the Budget Control Act. This committee was to make recommendations for tax increases or spending cuts or a combination of these measures in order to reduce the federal debt by \$1.3 trillion or more. As a result, mandatory cuts to military spending and social programs are to take place starting in 2013



### Appropriations and Budget

#### FY 2012 Appropriations

Last Friday, the President signed the first "minibus" package of three FY 2012 spending bills (H.R. 2112) for Agriculture, Commerce-Justice-Science, and Transportation-HUD. The bill also includes a continuing resolution (CR) to provide funding through December 16 for all other federal programs. The previous CR expired on Friday. The new CR funds most federal programs at 1.503 percent below FY 2011 levels. It is anticipated that the remaining nine annual appropriations bills, including Labor-Health and Human Services-Education, in a single "omnibus" package prior to the end of the calendar year.

Spending for the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which is part of the minibus, was reduced by an overall nine percent. Funding for Section 8 Choice Vouchers and project-based renewals are close to level-funding; and funding for the Section 811 Housing for People with Disabilities is increased by ten percent. Programs that were affected most by the cuts are the HOME investment program (38% cut) and Community Development Block Grant (12% cut). For further information, contact [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).

#### National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012

Late last week, two amendments were introduced by Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK), to the National Defense Authorization Act, S.1867, with regard to TBI. On Fri., he introduced S.AMDT.1096 regarding a sense of Congress on treatment options for members of the Armed Forces and veterans for TBI and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), including alternative treatment methods; and to ensure that existing veteran and medical benefits cover the use of viable available treatment options for TBI, including alternative treatment methods.

The day before, Sen. Inhofe introduced S.AMDT.1097 to S.1867 to eliminate gaps and redundancies among the over 200 programs within the Department of Defense that address psychological health and TBI. The amendment calls for the Secretary of Defense to submit to the congressional defense committees a plan to streamline programs currently sponsored or funded by the Department to address psychological health and TBI.

## **FY 2013 Budget**

Yesterday, the Super Committee reported that it was unable to come to an agreement with regard to reducing the federal budget as charged by the Budget Deficit Control Act. This means that automatic, across-the-board cuts to federal discretionary spending will begin in January 2013. This "sequestration" process would not apply to Medicaid and Social Security programs, but will mean deep cuts for a number of discretionary health, disability and education programs. TBI Act programs are discretionary programs.

## **Balanced Budget Amendment**

Last week, the House voted on a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution by a vote of 261 to 165, which were 29 votes short of the 290 needed for passage. The vote was negotiated as part of the debt ceiling deal reached over the summer, the Budget Control Act, which requires both chambers to vote on the amendment before the end of the year.

NASHIA signed onto a large coalition letter developed by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities opposing the balanced budget amendment. To see a copy of the letter that will be circulated to Senate members following the Thanksgiving recess go to <https://cbpp.wufoo.com/forms/signon-letter-oppose-a-balanced-budget-amendment-z7p0m3/>.

## **Other Legislation**

### **Asset Development/ABLE Act**

The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act, ABLE Act (H.R. 3423 and S. 1872) was reintroduced on November 15 by Reps. Ander Crenshaw (R-FL), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Kathy McMorris-Rodgers (R-WA) in the House and Sens. Bob Casey (D-PA) and Richard Burr (R-NC) in the Senate. The purpose of the legislation is to encourage and assist individuals with disabilities and families to save their own money so that they can maintain health, independence, and quality of life. ABLE accounts allow people with disabilities to save for expenses such as education, housing, and transportation. ABLE accounts would be disregarded when determining eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs, and other means-tested programs.

### **CLASS Act**

The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health approved H.R. 1173 repealing the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Program in the Affordable Care Act. The National Council on Disability sent a letter to President Obama urging the Administration to oppose repeal and continue implementation of the CLASS Program. In addition, LeadingAge is making a free call-in line available for people to call their Senators and urge them not to repeal CLASS program. The number is 866-898-2642.

### **TBI Reauthorization**

Rebecca Wolfkiel, NASHIA Governmental Relations Consultant, BIAA and NDRN have been laying the ground work to have legislation introduced next year to reauthorize funding for the TBI Act programs. They have been meeting with potential sponsors and co-sponsors to develop a timeline for introduction and obtaining co-sponsors. It is hoped that the legislation will be drafted by the Congressional Brain Injury Awareness Day scheduled for March 21, 2012. Meanwhile, NASHIA has distributed a survey to a lead State agency contact in each State, Territory and District of Columbia to obtain input for possible changes to the bill and the program. The BIAA has also asked its affiliates to provide recommendations. And, NASHIA and TBI stakeholders have been reaching out to other organizations and federal agencies to obtain their suggestions and support. This information will be useful for going forward with any suggested recommendations for the TBI programs. Should anyone have any comments or wish further information, please contact Susan Vaughn or Becky at [publicpolicy@nashia.org](mailto:publicpolicy@nashia.org).

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*The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators assists State government in promoting partnerships and building systems to meet the needs of individuals with brain injuries and their families.*

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