

Capitol News!

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Dear NASHIA Member,

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This Week in Congress



Both the House and Senate are in session this week; congressional leaders continue to meet with the President over the federal budget resolution needed to extend the debt ceiling by August 2.

Budget Resolution

Congress Is Still Negotiating Budget Resolution

President Obama held a press conference Monday to update Americans on the progress to reach a bi-partisan consensus on the budget resolution needed to raise the debt ceiling by August 2. Meanwhile, Vice President Biden has been meeting with democratic and republican leaders in both houses to come up with a plan to lower the debt through reduced spending and increased revenues. While there does not seem to be a consensus with regard to increasing taxes or closing tax loopholes, cuts in discretionary programs are still being considered, including cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, farm subsidies; as well as increasing Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac premiums, limiting civilian and military retirement benefits, raising the airport security ticket fee and limiting the reach of Pell grants.

Last week, an op-ed was published on the website of the Capitol Hill newspaper, "The Hill", that was written by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), on modernizing Medicaid policies that could potentially result in savings for both federal and State government. The authors stated that Medicaid savings could be realized by offering individuals with disabilities opportunities to live in community-based settings as opposed to more costly institutional facilities. The authors noted that these efforts would also promote compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Olmstead decision. To see the article go to: <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/healthcare/169259-modernize-medicaid-to-better-support-people-with-disabilities>.

Meanwhile, NASHIA, along with over 140 national organizations, signed on to a Roll Call ad calling on Congress not to cut Medicaid benefits as individuals with disabilities and who are elderly depend on to live in their homes and communities.

Other Legislation

Workforce Investment and Rehabilitation Act Reauthorization

On June 22, Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-CA) introduced H.R.2295, the Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2011, which amends the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) to revise requirements and reauthorize appropriations for: (1) WIA Title I, workforce investment systems for job training and employment services; and (2) WIA Title II, adult education and family literacy education programs

The bill revises and reauthorizes workforce investment systems with respect to: (1) State and local planning, allocation, work force investment board membership, and performance accountability; (2) one-stop centers; (3) consolidated funding for adult program activities, including job training, dislocated worker retraining, the employment service system, and reemployment grants; (4) training programs for both out-of-school and in-school youth, including challenge grants; and (5) national job training programs, including the Job Corps and programs for Native Americans, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and veterans.

The legislation also revises requirements and reauthorizes appropriations for: (1) vocational rehabilitation services under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and (2) the Helen Keller National Center Act. The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee again postponed a scheduled markup to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (no bill number). On July 14, the HELP committee will hold a hearing on employment for persons with disabilities entitled "Lessons from the Field: Learning from What Works for Employment for Persons with Disabilities." Witnesses will include Kathy Martinez, Assistant Secretary of Labor at the Office of Disability Employment Policy, and Tom Ridge, chairman of the Board of the National Organization on Disability.

Education

Rep. John Kline (R-MN), Chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, introduced H.R. 2445, the State and Local Funding Flexibility Act. The bill is the third in a series of education reform bills that would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to allow State and local educational agencies maximum flexibility to use federal funds provided under the law. The Committee will mark up the bill Wednesday, today. The Council for Exceptional Children is opposed to the bill and the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Task Force has written letter expressing concerns about redirecting limited education funding away from its intended purpose.

Twenty-four Senators recently signed a "Dear Colleague" letter to Senate appropriators urging them to provide the highest possible funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in FY 2012. The letter emphasizes that the continued underfunding of IDEA, in combination with current State fiscal crises, forces school districts to either raise taxes or use general education funds to make up for the shortfall.

Committee Hearings

Child Abuse & Neglect

Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, held a hearing Tuesday on child deaths due to maltreatment, focusing on a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on what is known about the circumstances of child deaths due to maltreatment, State approaches to gathering and reporting this information and what the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is doing to support the collection and accurate reporting of this data.

Most child maltreatment deaths result from physical abuse, especially children receiving injuries to their heads. Known as abusive head trauma, these injuries occur when a child's head is slammed against a surface, is severely struck or when a child is violently shaken. There have been major improvements in the ability to diagnose abusive head trauma and in investigators' abilities to recognize when a caregiver's explanation for injuries do not match the severity of the injuries.

Since the 1970s, States have participated in a voluntary national data collection system reporting data on investigations of maltreatment and information on abused children. This system, called the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), is used by HHS to prepare annual reports on child maltreatment. The nongovernmental National Center for Child Death Review (NCCDR) acts as a resource center for State and local teams that review cases of child deaths. These teams collect and report information on child fatalities from all causes, and 37 States currently report data to the national database. The NCCDR uses this data to focus attention on child fatality risks and to develop strategies to prevent fatalities in the future. States also have data on child fatalities from sources such as law enforcement reports, death certificates, or medical records.

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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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