

AACN Policy Beat

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Healthcare Reform: The AACN Update

After an August recess where healthcare reform was vehemently debated by the public and federal policy makers, the Administration and Congress resumed in early September and placed the issue at forefront of the legislative agenda. In an act to demonstrate his commitment to reforming the healthcare system, President Obama addressed a joint session of Congress on Wednesday, September 9, 2009 to discuss his plan. Health insurance reform was cited by the President as a major tenant. In his address, the President stated, “*Since health care represents one-sixth of our economy, I believe it makes more sense to build on what works and fix what doesn't, rather than try to build an entirely new system from scratch.*” The President’s plan is structured to meet three goals 1.) “*security and stability to those who have health insurance*” 2.) “*insurance for those who don't,*” and 3.) “*slow the growth of health care costs for our families, our businesses, and our government.*” For more information on the President’s address see:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/health_care

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-to-a-Joint-Session-of-Congress-on-Health-Care

Shortly after the President’s address, the Senate Finance Committee Chair, Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) announced his mark of the *America’s Health Future Act of 2009* on Wednesday, September 16, 2009. The legislation includes provisions such as tax credits for low and middle class families to purchase healthcare insurance in the private market, Medicare and Medicaid incentives for completing healthy lifestyle programs, an investment in the primary care workforce, and Medicare incentives to reward quality care. For more information on this plan see:

http://finance.senate.gov/sitepages/leg/LEG%202009/091609%20Americas_Healthy_Future_Act.pdf

The release of the Senate Finance Community bill provides an opportunity for AACN, our colleagues in the advance practice community, and AARP to continue our work on the *Medicare Graduate Nursing Education Act of 2009* (S.1569) introduced by Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), a member of the Senate Finance Committee. As noted in last month’s *Policy Beat*, the legislation would provide a dedicated funding stream through Medicare to support the clinical education of APRNs. AACN applauds Senator Stabenow’s commitment to this important legislation as she filed S. 1569 as an amendment to the *America’s Health Future Act of 2009* on Friday, September 18, 2009. While filing the amendment is only one of many steps in the process, the recognition of this proposal is momentous for APRN education and AACN will continue to work with Senator Stabenow and our colleagues to move this initiative forward. For more information on this legislation see:

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/SupportedLegislation.htm>

AACN continues to support the inclusion of the *Nurse Education Expansion and Development (NEED) Act* (S. 497) in the final healthcare reform package. AACN has supported this crucial legislation, which will offer nursing schools flexible funding to hire, recruit, and retain faculty, as well as expand infrastructure, among other objectives, since 2003. In order to move this legislation through healthcare reform, it is critical that additional Senators sign on to co-sponsor S. 497. Please consider taking action today by sending a message to your Senator today using this link: <http://capwiz.com/aacn/issues/alert/?alertid=13718161>

As Congress continues to debate and deliberate healthcare reform, AACN will keep you apprised of important information. While AACN supports many provisions in the current healthcare reform proposals circulating, the organization does not take an official stance on the entirety of any one bill. For more information on healthcare reform and the proposals discussed above, see: <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/npb.htm>

House and Senate Appropriations Update

As reported in last month's *Policy Beat*, the House passed the Labor, Health, and Human Services (LHHS) appropriations bill in late July. The Senate has yet to take their LHHS appropriations bill to the floor. AACN along with over 40 nursing organizations will write to the House and Senate Conference Committee members requesting the highest possible funding level for each of the Title VIII programs. For more information on funding levels for the Title VIII programs and other federal programs of interest see:

House Passed LHHS Appropriations Bill

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/pdf/FY10ChartHouse.pdf>

Senate Appropriations Committee Passes LHHS Appropriations Bill

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/pdf/FY10ChartSenate.pdf>

For more information on the Nursing Community see:

<http://www.thenursingcommunity.org/>

Constituents Meeting with NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins

AACN staff attended the Constituents Meeting with newly appointed NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins on September 9, 2009. Dr. Collins spoke about the need to “translate basic science discoveries into new and better treatment, putting science to work for the benefit of healthcare reform, comparative effectiveness research, and encouraging a greater focus on global health.” Additionally, Dr. Collins spoke about how NIH had used ARRA dollars to “stimulate the economy, create and preserve jobs, and advance biomedical research.” In fact, the NIH Director noted that every grant creates seven new jobs. One of the major components of NIH stimulus dollars was the Challenge Grants. Dr. Collins stated that they expected to receive between 2,000-3,000 applications. However, more than 21,000 grant proposals were submitted and only 3% could be supported by the stimulus dollars— a clear indication that thousands of new and innovative research proposals were left unfunded.

Dr. Collins requested the help of NIH constituents to “have a common and consistent voice in support of the importance of medical research, develop new and compelling ways to describe NIH research to decision makers and the public, and to keep the channels of communication between NIH and our constituents wide open.” For more information regarding the Constituents Meeting see: <http://videocast.nih.gov/Summary.asp?File=15263>

Advocacy for NIH and in particular NINR continue to be a top priority for AACN. New strategies and advocacy materials to promote the important work of NIH and NINR funded nurse researchers are currently being discussed. AACN will continue to keep you informed of our advocacy efforts to address Dr. Collins request for help from NIH constituents.

Help Create New Nursing Advocates

The importance and relevance of advocacy at the national level is critical for the profession. Over the years, nursing has grown more engaged in shaping healthcare policy. Yet more work needs to be done. The profession will benefit greatly from a new generation of nurses who are politically active. Consider being a change agent for this progress by having your students and faculty sign up to receive this monthly policy newsletter. Once your faculty and students register, they will receive *AACN's Policy Beat* and other periodic action alert messages. This information offers an easy entry into the nursing advocacy world. To register, please direct your students and faculty to: <http://capwiz.com/aacn/mlm/signup>.