Take Advantage of the August Congressional Recess

AACN’s government affairs staff has developed a new resource for its members to maximize advocacy efforts during the August Congressional recess. The slide show provides background and context on the recent debt ceiling negotiations and new law, specific advocacy initiatives to engage in, and AACN-related talking points, as well as other important updates. The information highlights three areas of advocacy including funding for nursing education, funding for nursing research, and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) scope of practice subjects. Specific to APRN issues, AACN has created opportunities to send messages directly to your legislators supporting the Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2011 and the Medicaid Advanced Practice Nurses and Physician Assistants Access Act of 2011. To send a letter to your members of Congress about these bills, see: http://capwiz.com/aacn/home/

Be sure to review the government affairs updates as they include information about the Graduate Nurse Education Demonstration program created through the Affordable Care Act, the call for comments on the definition of patient-centered outcomes research sought by the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute, and the call for AACN’s 2011 Policy Luminary Award nominees.

To view this slide show, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/pdf/AugustRecess.pdf

Federal Budget and FY 2012 Appropriations Update

On August 2, 2011, the President signed the *Budget Control Act of 2011* [Public Law No: 112-025], which seeks to address the concerns facing America’s economy. The bill establishes discretionary spending caps for security (defined as spending related to the Pentagon, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Homeland Security, and spending related to international affairs) and non-security programs starting in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 through FY 2021. The bill also requires that the House of Representatives and the Senate vote on a joint resolution that proposes a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. This was a major negotiation point during the debate between the House Republicans and Democrats. The law mandates that this vote must occur between September 30, 2011 and December 31, 2011. The law also mandates the creation of a “Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction” or what is being called the “super committee.” The goal of this committee is to reduce the deficit by at least $1.5 trillion within the next nine fiscal years. This will be accomplished by preparing legislation that will address both short- and long-term solutions to the financial crisis. Members of the super committee include:

- Senator Patty Murray (D-WA); Co-Chair
- Senator Max Baucus (D-MT)
- Senator John Kerry (D-MA)
- Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ)
- Representative Jeb Hensarling (R-TX); Co-Chair
- Representative Dave Camp (R-MI)
- Representative Fed Upton (R-MI)
- Representative James Clyburn (D-SC)
Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA)  
Senator Rob Portman (R-OH)

Representative Xavier Becerra (D-CA)  
Representative Chris VanHollen (D-MD)

The implications of this law will affect funding for programs of interest to AACN members in FY 2012. The law sets a spending cap on non-security discretionary funding at $359 billion for FY 2012. This is $35 billion above the House-passed non-security discretionary funding levels (after excluding the National Nuclear Security Administration funding). The House has already passed a number of their non-security spending bills and it is unclear how they will handle the funding difference in their cap and the cap set by the new law. For example, dollars could be reallocated or seen as additional savings. Ultimately, more than $18 billion will still need to be cut from the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill when compared to FY 2011. AACN will continue to monitor the appropriations process and advocate for nursing education and research dollars.

NIH Seeks Comments on the NIH Common Fund Programs

Please see the information sent by the National Institutes of Health.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Common Fund supports exceptionally innovative programs that are inherently high-risk but have the potential for high-payoff by catalyzing research across all of NIH and in the biomedical research community.

New ideas for Common Fund programs are identified annually by internal and external scientists and stakeholders. We are now asking your input on these ideas to help us shape new programs for 2013. We want to know which ideas you think have the potential to fundamentally change how we think about, support, or do research in a specific field, or to create a new field all together.

Provide your input today: http://commonfund.nih.gov/strategicplanning

The feedback period is open until Wednesday, September 14, 2011.

The NIH Common Fund encourages collaboration and supports a series of exceptionally high impact, trans-NIH programs. These programs are supported by the Common Fund, and managed by the NIH Office of the Director in partnership with the various NIH Institutes, Centers and Offices. Additional information about the NIH Common Fund can be found at http://commonfund.nih.gov.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) – “The Nation's Medical Research Agency” – includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit http://www.nih.gov.

NIH Director’s Award Programs: Pioneer and New Innovator Awards

Please see the announcement below from NIH regarding their Pioneer and Innovator Awards.

NIH Director’s Pioneer and New Innovator Awards Program

NIH welcomes proposals for 2012 NIH Director’s Pioneer Awards and New Innovator Awards for innovative approaches to major challenges in biomedical or behavioral research.
Pioneer Awards:
- Up to $2.5 million in direct costs over 5 years
- Open to scientists at any career stage

New Innovator Awards:
- Up to $1.5 million in direct costs over 5 years
- For early career stage investigators (ESI), defined as those who have not received an NIH R01 or similar grant and are within 10 years of completing their terminal research degree or medical residency

NIH expects to make at least 7 Pioneer Awards and at least 33 New Innovator Awards in summer 2012. To continue its strong record of diversity in these programs, NIH especially encourages women and members of groups that are underrepresented in NIH research to apply.

The deadline for submitting Pioneer Award applications is October 7, 2011. See the instructions in the Funding Opportunity Announcement RFA-RM-11-004 (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-11-004.html) and http://commonfund.nih.gov/pioneer for more information. Send questions to pioneer@nih.gov.

The deadline for submitting New Innovator Award applications is October 14, 2011. See the instructions in the Funding Opportunity Announcement RFA-RM-11-005 (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-11-005.html) and http://commonfund.nih.gov/newinnovator for more information. Send questions to newinnovator@nih.gov.

Creating Future Advocates: Tools to Influence Federal Policy

Take a moment to help build the network of nearly 3,000 nursing deans, directors, faculty, and students who have already made nursing advocacy a priority. As AACN’s grassroots network grows, so does the voice of professional nursing on Capitol Hill. While one advocate can make a difference, thousands of nurses and nursing students united to support one common message is the most effective way to ensure our federal legislators hear from their nursing expert constituents. By encouraging your students to sign up for AACN’s grassroots network, they will have access to AACN Policy Beat, receive “action alerts” when it is critical to send a message to members of Congress on important policy decisions and will receive updates on breaking information that impacts nursing education, research, and practice. To join, simply encourage your students fill out the information requested in the following link: http://capwiz.com/aacn/mlm/signup/. For more information, contact Dr. Suzanne Miyamoto at smiyamoto@aacn.nche.edu.

HHS Celebrated Community Health Center Week

Last week, our nation celebrated Community Health Centers. The Affordable Care Act established the allocation of $11 billion to develop 350 new sites and grow currently operating centers in a five year time frame. In Secretary Sebelius’ comments she addressed the vital role health centers play in providing high-quality primary and preventive care to the most vulnerable populations at cost effective rates. These centers provide care to nearly 20 million people each year and the investments made by the Obama Administration in community health centers has help to provide care to nearly 2.5 million additional patients. To read more information on efforts being undertaken to support Community Health Centers, see: http://www.healthcare.gov/news/factsheets/increasing_access_.html
To watch a recording of Secretary Sebelius’ comments, see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLjJd1uBkaU