



Advocates for EMS June Report

HEALTH REFORM

Health reform legislation kept Capitol Hill very busy as both the House and Senate committees attempted to negotiate deals between parties and various factions of the Democratic party before parting for the month long August Congressional recess. On Friday, July 17th, the House Ways and Means Committee passed its portion of H.R. 3200, America's Affordable Health Choices Act, by a margin of 23-18 on Friday, July 17th. The House Education and Labor Committee approved its provisions 26-22 on the same day.

The Energy and Commerce Committee confronted tenuous negotiations as the more moderate wing of the Democratic Party, known as the Blue Dogs, demanded concessions before they would support the bill's passage out of Committee. Late in the evening on Friday, July 31st, the Energy and Commerce Committee completed its markup of its portion of H.R. 3200, approving the bill on a party-line vote of 31-28. Despite two weeks of negotiations, five Blue Dog Democrats opposed the bill -- Rick Boucher (D-VA), Bart Stupak (D-MI), Jim Matheson (D-UT), Charlie Melancon (D-LA), and John Barrow (D-GA). Nevertheless, the Blue Dogs were able to secure an amendment requiring any public plan to have negotiated reimbursement rates with health care providers, rather than paying normal Medicare rates. Moreover, the committee agreed to cut premium subsidies for lower-income Americans seeking coverage on the newly-created insurance exchange. Chairman Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Ranking Member Joe Barton (R-TX), agreed not to consider an estimated 45 to 50 amendments that were described as minor. Rather, amendments that are agreeable to both parties will be bundled into a separate bill that the committee will mark up in September.

The legislation was amended in Committee to include similar language that was included in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee's version of the bill that authorizes Emergency Care Regionalization Demonstration Programs and grant program for trauma centers. In addition, the bill makes permanent the Emergency Care Coordination Center (ECCC) within the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response's Office at the Department of Health and Human Services. The ECCC is charged with promoting and funding research in emergency medicine and trauma health care; promoting regional partnerships and more effective emergency medical systems in order to enhance appropriate triage, distribution and care of routine community patients and promoting local, regional and state emergency medical systems' preparedness for response to public health events. In addition, the measure also establishes the Council of Emergency Care, which is made up of employees of the Federal Government who are experts in emergency care and management. Finally, the provision requires a report to Congress which shall consider factors including emergency department crowding and boarding and delays in care following presentation.

A panel of 6 Finance Committee Democrats and Republicans continues to work towards achieving a bipartisan agreement on their plan, which the CBO has scored at \$900 billion over ten years, which will cover 95% of Americans by 2015 and will be completely offset. The Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) stated he is aiming for his committee to complete its version of a health reform package by September 15th. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY) denies agreeing to any timetable on negotiations.

APPROPRIATIONS

A significant boost was provided in both the House and Senate FY 2010 Department of Transportation appropriations bills for the National Emergency Medical Services Information System (NEMSIS). In FY 09 the program was funded at \$750,000. On July 23rd, the House passed its version of the bill and included \$1.5 million for NEMSIS. The Senate Appropriations Committee passed its version of the bill on July 30th and included \$2.25 million for the program. The Senate will consider the bill before the Senate floor this fall.

On July 24th, the House passed its version of the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (Labor-HHS) Appropriations bill by a vote of 264-153. The Senate passed their version of the bill out on July 30th by a vote of 30-0 but it was not considered before the full Senate before they departed for the August recess.

OTHER LEGISLATION

Finally, AEMS is requesting your immediate assistance to contact your Senate offices to ask them to cosponsor S. 1353, the *Dale Long Emergency Medical Services Provider Protection Act*. This legislation would extend federal death benefits under the Public Safety Officers' Benefit (PSOB) program to those ground and air EMS personnel who are employed by a non-profit ambulance agency and die in the line of duty. The legislation is named after the paramedic with Bennington Rescue Squad in Bennington, Vermont who recently died in the line of duty.

This legislation would extend Public Safety Office Death Benefits to the survivors of medics who are employed by nongovernmental EMS agencies and die in the line of duty. Governmental medics are already eligible for death benefits but tens of thousands of nongovernmental medics are ineligible even though they provide the same life-saving medical care in often dangerous environments.

AEMS has made the process for you to contact your House Representative easy by using Capwiz on the AEMS Web site, <http://www.capwiz.com/naemt/issues/alert/?alertid=11897156>.

If this link does not connect, visit the AEMS Web site at www.advocatesforems.org, click on "Take Action" in the left side column bar, click on the "Issues & Legislation" tab, click on "Legislative Alerts and Updates" then click on the featured alert, "Contact Your Representatives in Congress to Cosponsor the Dale Long Emergency Medical Services Provider Protection Act!"

This link directs you to an informational letter on how to make contact with your Senator's office, talking points and an email template. The email template is available by entering your zip code in the "Action Alert" box and clicking "Go." We highly encourage you to call the office of your Senator's Office and ask to speak to the Judiciary Legislative Assistant and discuss with the importance of this legislation.