



March 26, 2010

Federal Legislative Update

Health Reform

This week was a historic week for health reform: Last night marked the end of the year-long effort to pass comprehensive health reform legislation when the U.S. House of Representatives passed the “reconciliation” bill (HR 4872) by a vote of 220-207. The bill will now go to President Obama for signature into law. The reconciliation bill includes many changes to the current health reform law, such as Medicaid payment reform.

The final push for health reform began Sunday evening, when the House voted to pass the Senate’s health reform bill (HR 3590), which was then **signed into law** by **President Obama on Tuesday**. The House also voted on Sunday to pass the first iteration of the reconciliation bill as the second piece to comprehensive health reform legislation, which the Senate voted 56-43 yesterday to pass with two minor changes to non-health care provisions. These revisions forced the measure back to the House for a re-vote last night.

This vote was the final legislative step needed for President Obama to sign the reconciliation package into law, thus completing the passage of comprehensive health reform legislation. The Academy released a [statement](#) on last night’s historic vote, and President Obama is expected to sign the final bill into law on Tuesday.

The [implementation timeline](#) for the health reform package has many of the law’s child health provisions set to be enacted in 2010. These include dependent coverage for young people up to age 26 for all individual and group policies, as well as the elimination of pre-existing condition exclusions for children.

AAP Leadership and Health Reform

On Monday, Dr. Palfrey [spoke](#) at a press conference following a **march in support of health reform** in Washington, DC. Dr. Palfrey participated in the march, organized by Doctors for America and other health care organizations, and spoke at the press conference alongside health care organization leaders and members of Congress.

On Tuesday, at the request of the White House, AAP President-Elect O. Marion Burton, MD, FAAP, was in attendance when President Obama gave a speech following the signing of HR 3590 into law.

Today, AAP President Judith Palfrey, MD, FAAP, posted a [blog](#) on The Huffington Post acknowledging the many benefits this comprehensive package has for children and the pediatricians who treat them.

Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization Advances in the Senate This Week

On Wednesday, the Senate Agriculture Committee unanimously approved *The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, an overhaul of federal child nutrition programs. The bill would provide \$4.5 billion over 10 years to child nutrition programs and focuses on three main themes: eliminating hunger, combating obesity and improving program management. *The Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act* aims to end child hunger by increasing access to and expanding eligibility for federal nutrition programs, as well as by piloting innovative methods to feed low-income children outside of school hours.

The bill seeks to reduce obesity and promote overall child health and well-being by improving the quality of school meals, giving the U.S. Department of Agriculture the authority to set new nutrition standards for all food served in schools (including vending machines and a la carte lines), and strengthen school wellness policies. The bill also provides significant new support for breastfeeding promotion in the WIC program. Programs reauthorized in this bill include the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, the Summer Food Service Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the After School Meals Program, and WIC.

Sessions-McCaskill Budget Freeze Amendment Defeated

The AAP and many other child health groups succeeded in defeating a potentially devastating amendment offered by Senators Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) and Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.). The amendment would have frozen virtually all federal spending for the next four years (Fiscal Years 2010-2013) and would have capped funding on all domestic discretionary programs, many of which include vital child health programs. The March 18 defeat of the amendment helped protect children's health and will preserve much-needed resources for children's health programs.