



May 1, 2006

## **CRD ASSOCIATES HEALTH POLICY UPDATE**

### **April 2006**

Congress – The House of Representatives was in session for just 7 days during the month of April, dealing with a handful of minor legislative issues before reaching an impasse on the FY07 budget resolution. The Senate was in session for only 9 days. It also dealt successfully with minor legislative matters, but it reached an impasse on the passage of immigration reform legislation. Both houses' impasses are continuing into May.

Title VII-Health Professions Training – We are continuing to work with our colleagues in the health professions training community to encourage members of the House and Senate to restore the funding that has been cut from the President's FY2007 budget request. Serious interest in restoring the funding has been expressed publicly by numerous members of the House and Senate committees – but that will not get it done. Persistent pressure from the grassroots (it is an election year after all) will be required throughout the legislative process.

On a related matter, we have learned that the Senate HELP Committee has now dropped the notion of drafting a reauthorization bill for Title VII this year. The staff now expects to consider this issue in 2007.

Health Services Research – We are continuing to work with the Friends of AHRQ, which has now adopted SGIM's policy of promoting investigator-initiated grants within AHRQ's funding. We have met with the staff to the House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees to express SGIM's concern with the shortsighted under-funding of this agency – a position with which they surprisingly agreed.

In addition, we have been actively supporting the funding for Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSAs), which are being administered by NIH's National Center for Research Resources. An RFA is on the street, with funding decisions expected later this year.

Veterans Health Funding – We continue to work closely with the Friends of the VA (FOVA) to support higher levels of funding for VA health research and services, including supporting a statement from FOVA sent to members of Congress.

Pay-for-Performance – We are closely monitoring legislative and, more importantly, administrative action with regard to the creation of a pay-for-performance system and the adoption of quality-related standards. No significant actions have occurred this month, but this continues to be a front-burner issue for CMS (less so for Congress at the moment).

Annual Meeting – CRD was heavily involved with a variety of sessions at the SGIM Annual Meeting in Los Angeles this month. CRD presented at or otherwise participated in the outgoing Governing Council’s meeting; the Advocacy Pre-course; the Regional Leadership retreat; the Health Policy Committee meeting; the workshop called “Influencing Federal Policy;” and the “Advocacy and Pay for Performance” symposium over a period of three days.

Health Policy Committee – Working with the Chair, we established the agenda for the Health Policy Committee meeting, actively participated in the meeting, and drafted the minutes of the meeting.

Health Policy Retreat – We have begun preliminary discussions with the HPC Chair concerning the scheduling of a retreat to better define and focus the HPC’s agenda for the coming year.

## **May 2006**

Congress – Congress is expected to be in session for the first four weeks of May. Both houses will take a one-week Memorial Day recess at the end of the month. The House will continue to try to break the impasse on the Budget resolution, while SGIM and others in the healthcare advocacy community will seek to replicate our success in getting a \$7.0 billion increase for education and health spending. Failing that, we will again seek to defeat the budget resolution.

Title VII – We will continue working with the Health Policy Committee and other advocates in Washington to argue for restoring the cuts recommended in the President’s budget for Title VII. Action is not expected on the appropriations bills this month.

Health Services Research – We will continue to work with both AHRQ and NIH to promote policies that enhance federal funding of health services research. We will also continue to take part in a number of the meetings being scheduled by the Friends of AHRQ with legislators and staff.

Veterans Health Funding – We will be participating in the meetings and other activities of the Friends of the VA to collectively build our lobbying strategy to obtain more funding for veterans health care and research. A House appropriations committee is expected to recommend funding levels for these programs on May 4.

National Institutes of Health – Much of our effort seeking increased funding in the House and Senate budget resolutions is designed specifically to enable NIH to receive additional funding in FY2007. The focus on these efforts will continue and will intensify in May.

Pay-for-Performance – This will continue to be a hot-button issue in May and throughout the year. We will continue to participate in meetings of the major coalitions that are interested in the issue's development and work with the HPC and SGIM's leadership in formulating positions that benefit SGIM members. Legislative action is not expected on pay-for-performance until 2007; a House Ways and Means Committee staff member has said that the issue is unlikely to be considered this year.

Health Policy Committee – Again this month, we will work with the HPC Chair to set an agenda for the monthly conference call, alert members to the call, participate in it, and produce minutes, as well as take any actions derived from the call.

Health Policy Retreat – We expect that the Health Policy Retreat will be scheduled for mid-June and that this month will require significant work to plan for, and produce materials for, the day-long meeting.

### **Status of Key Legislative Issues**

President's Budget – Was delivered to Capitol Hill on February 6.

House Labor-HHS and Veterans Appropriations Bills – Hearings are currently being held and the crafting of legislation is anticipated in June.

Senate Labor-HHS and Veterans Appropriations Bills – Hearings have begun and no dates have yet been set for the drafting of legislation.

AHRO Reauthorization Bill – Senate HELP Committee staff expects to begin working on a bill later in the spring.

Title VII Reauthorization Bill – Senate HELP Committee staff expects to begin working on a bill in 2007.

Pay-for-Performance – Dropped from reconciliation bill; legislative prospects are uncertain. CMS demonstration project has begun in scaled-back format.

Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) – This bill has passed the Senate; awaiting action in the House, where the leadership has been opposed to its consideration. The Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetics, Health and Society has expressed some urgency to Congress on the need to adopt it.