



Cavarocchi-Ruscio-Dennis Associates

Health Policy Report

February 1, 2007

REMINDER:

Capitol Hill Day is February 14.

Off the Hill Week is February 19-23.

Make your voice heard!

To participate, contact Francine Jetton at

jettonf@sgim.org.

Overview

The House of Representatives and the Senate convened on January 4, 2007 with Democratic majorities in both houses for the first time since January 3, 1995. After twelve years in the “wilderness,” Democrats have come into office with an aggressive agenda, quickly passing six major pieces of legislation in the House. Among them were authority for the Administration to negotiate drug prices and to fund stem cell research.

Later in January, the Appropriations Committees developed a year-long Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund the government until September 30. Many of the details of that CR are found in the paragraphs below. It included an additional \$2.3 billion for healthcare and education programs, as the new Congress attempted to begin to address many of the previous shortcomings in funding.

This report outlines the status of Board-approved priority issues as we begin the second month of the 110th Congress. It is in bulleted and brief paragraph format for ease of review. If you require additional information on any of the issues or activities described here – or if you would like to work on any of the

issues described here – the final section contains the contact information for the members of the HPC Executive Committee and staff contacts.

Education Subcommittee Issues

- **Training in Primary Care Medicine and Dentistry:** Under the terms of the continuing resolution, this program would be maintained at the \$40.8 million level throughout FY07. The only federal program encouraging primary care clinicians to practice in medically underserved areas, for FY08, SGIM will focus its efforts on (1) promoting reauthorization legislation that lays the foundation for more robust and sustained support, and (2) securing more adequate appropriations for FY08. An integral focus of SGIM's efforts will be on strengthening activities designed to increase diversity in the health professions workforce.
- **Faculty loan repayment/Minority Faculty Fellowship:** SGIM views this program as a proven approach for attracting individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to serve as faculty. Our efforts this year will focus on continued authorization and adequate appropriations in FY08.
- **Centers of excellence:** SGIM will advocate for continued funding for this program, which supports designated health professions schools enrolling non-majority individuals.

Research Subcommittee Issues

- **AHRQ:** This agency will continue to be funded in FY07 at \$318.7 million. SGIM is seeking an increase of \$50 million for FY08, that will allow for the reinstatement of investigator-initiated research and offset loses to inflation after four years of level funding. In addition, the subcommittee is developing an aggressive and comprehensive proposal for reauthorizing the AHRQ statute in 2007. SGIM members are urged to submit their ideas to Chairman Harry Selker at hselker@tufts-nemc.org.
- **NIH CTSA:** The FY07 Continuing Resolution contains an additional \$620 million for NIH, which separately is moving forward aggressively with the creation of CTSA's, designed to replace the old GCRCs. Funding levels for FY07 will be determined by the NIH after completion of the CR.

- **VA Research:** VA research funding is expected to remain at \$399 million in FY07. The subcommittee will continue to work through the Friends of the VA in an effort to obtain an increase in this amount in FY08.
- **Other Priorities:** At this time, we expect that the additional priority programs of this subcommittee (National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities, the Office of Research on Women's Health, Rural Health Research, and Public Health Research at the CDC) will all be level funded in FY2007. SGIM supports additional funding for each of these programs in FY08.

Clinical Practice Subcommittee Issues

- **Reimbursement and the RUC:** At the upcoming RUC meeting, the practice expense survey will be discussed. An update will be provided following the meeting.
- **P4P and SGR:** For 2007, Congress froze physician payments and created a quality reporting. This program, beginning July 1, 2007, would provide a 1.5 percent bonus payment for reporting physicians who report on all the measures for which they have data. Details about the program are still being formulated.
- **National Health Service Corps:** This program will continue to be funded at \$125.4 million in FY2007.
- **Community Health Centers:** The continuing resolution provided a \$207 million dollar increase for Community Health Centers. They will be funded at \$1.98 billion.
- **Rural Health Programs:** These programs will be level funded at \$38.8 million and \$8.7 million respectively, under the year long continuing resolution.
- **Health Information Technology:** Legislation will most likely be reintroduced in the 110th Congress. SGIM members are strongly urged to forward their input on this issue to the HPC.

Health Policy Executive Committee Contact Information

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To volunteer for the HPC, please contact anyone listed above.