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ACTION ALERTS

Two targeted alerts on the economic stimulus package were sent last week to affiliates of UCP.

http://ga4.org/publicpolicy/notice-description.tcl?newsletter_id=18804342

http://ga4.org/publicpolicy/notice-description.tcl?newsletter_id=18865919

MAJOR EVENTS LAST WEEK

Health Care

The House of Representatives fell 15 votes short of the two-thirds majority required to override President Bush's second veto of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) reauthorization bill ([H.R. 3963](#)). SCHIP is now funded at current levels until March 31, 2009.

<http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:h.r.03963:/>

Medicaid

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH), and Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson announced an economic stimulus package that, much to the disappointment of Medicaid advocates, does not include an increase in the Medicaid Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP – the federal share of Medicaid spending). The agreement includes tax rebates for middle and low income individuals and business tax credits. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) ceded negotiating authority with the Bush Administration to the House believing that a package could be developed more quickly. However, Majority Leader Reid later said that the Senate could improve on the House package. The National Governors Association, and other Medicaid stakeholders including organizations representing people with disabilities, children, seniors, unions, and health and long term services providers had been advocating for a temporary increase in the federal Medicaid match as a means of assisting states and Medicaid beneficiaries during an expected economic downturn when many states are already being forced to make cuts to their Medicaid programs. The Bush Administration, along with many Congressional Republicans, does not support a temporary FMAP increase.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) published a proposed rule in the Federal Register on January 18 that would allow more Medicaid beneficiaries to be in charge of their own personal assistance services, including personal care services, instead of having those services delivered by an agency. CMS requests public comment on how states could allow Medicaid beneficiaries who need help with the activities of daily living to hire, direct, train or fire their own personal care workers, including family members. The proposal would put into place a provision of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 that allows states to elect a state plan option to provide care in ways that previously required “waivers” of previous Medicaid laws. Enrollment in the new state plan option is voluntary for individuals and the state must also provide traditional agency-delivered services if the beneficiary wishes to discontinue self-directed care. There is a 30-day comment period; comments are due February 19, 2008. See the proposed rule at: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicaidGenInfo/Downloads/CMS2229P.PDF>

ADA Restoration

Members of the DPC, along with representatives from other key advocacy organizations, met with House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) to discuss progress in the ADA Restoration and next steps. Representative Hoyer underscored the need for individuals to contact their lawmakers and clearly state how their lives are personally being affected by the current weakened ADA. He noted, as advocates did, that education on the ADA itself was needed and paramount to success in the House. Only a handful of Representatives who passed the original ADA are still in the House. Knowledge of ADA and its original intent has significantly lessened since 1990, particularly among House Members.

MAJOR EVENTS AHEAD

State of the Union Address

President Bush gives his final State of the Union Address tonight at 9:00 p.m. EST. Part of his address is expected to focus on the economy and the need for the Congress to move quickly to send an economic stimulus spending package to him for his signature as soon as possible. The President may also make a last plea for the Congress to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act. He is also expected to discuss holding down domestic spending while asking for more funding for the Iraq war.

Economic Stimulus

The Senate Finance Committee, chaired by Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT), and possibly other Senate committees are expected to mark-up an economic stimulus package. Although attempts are being made to include a temporary FMAP increase in the package, observers are skeptical about whether this effort will be successful. Other proposals such as including an extension of unemployment insurance and a food stamp expansion are seen as more viable.

If the Senate adds substantially to the scaled down House package, it may make the package more difficult to be reconciled between the House and Senate and for the President to agree to sign the package into law. All parties involved in the negotiations are aiming to complete action on this bill prior to the mid February President's Day recess.

ADA Restoration

The House Education and Labor Committee has scheduled a hearing on the ADA Restoration Act this Tuesday the 29th at 10:00 a.m. EST. A live webcast will be available at: <http://edworkforce.house.gov>. This hearing marks the beginning of the real push to get ADA Restoration through the House. It is likely that the bill will be marked-up by the Education and Labor Committee within the next couple of weeks. Additional House committees of jurisdiction may hold hearings and markups in the near future.

Health Care

On Tuesday, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, chaired by Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), will hold a hearing on "Covering Uninsured Children". For more information see: <http://energycommerce.house.gov/membios/schedule.shtml>

On Thursday, the Senate Budget Committee, chaired by Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND) will hold a hearing on "Health Care Spending". For more information, see <http://budget.senate.gov/democratic/hearingstate.html>

Education

DPC staff will meet senior staff of the U. S. Department of Education to discuss key implementation issues surrounding the assessment of students with disabilities under the No Child Left Behind Act and other policies related to students with disabilities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Disability Policy Seminar

http://www.ucp.org/ucp_generalsub.cfm/1/8/12477

All available hotel rooms at the Hyatt Regency have now been filled. Lists of alternate hotels and Seminar registrants by state have been posted on The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy web sites. Seminar attendees are strongly encouraged to coordinate their Hill visits with the other registered attendees from their state. The deadline for Seminar registration without incurring a late fee is February 7. All Seminar information is available at: <http://www.thearc.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?&pid=1642&srcid=183> and http://www.ucp.org/ucp_generalsub.cfm/1/8/12477 in addition to the web pages of our Seminar partner organizations – AAIDD, AUCD, & NCADD.