

## ECFC Weekly Legislative Update

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# Peek at the Week: *Health Care Edition* October 5-9, 2009

## Friday's Daily Health Care Check Up

**Weekly Prescription:** The Administration moved one step closer to achieving health care reform this week as the Senate Finance Committee wrapped up consideration of amendments to the Baucus mark. The Committee is now awaiting scores from CBO and is expected to vote on the bill mid-week next week. The lobbying by the Administration will only intensify as the Congressional leadership moves to merge bills in the House and Senate. While liberal Democrats will fight hard for their priorities, the Administration's efforts will focus on winning support from moderates in both parties. The divide between liberal and moderate Democrats on issues like public option will make a floor vote in the Senate unlikely before November. Republicans hope that the Democratic infighting will translate into political advantages for Republicans going into the next elections.

## At the White House

The White House will shift its focus back to health care reform Monday as President Obama speaks to physicians who support the legislation being written in Congress. The Administration will work to gain momentum as the Senate Finance Committee votes on its bill early next week. The Administration worked hard behind the scenes to ensure that Committee members' concerns were addressed.

## On The Hill

### Senate

The Senate Finance Committee completed its work on its health care reform bill late last night. Committee members will vote on the bill early next week after the amended bill is scored by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) has said publicly that he believes he has the votes to pass a bill out of the Committee. All eyes will be focused on what Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) decides to do. Senator Snowe remains undecided on whether or not she will vote for the bill. Chairman Baucus and the Administration worked over the last week to address her concerns, including reducing the penalty for individuals who do not purchase insurance. While her vote would not determine the bill's fate in the Committee, it could affect the final bill on the floor as it is unknown whether all 60 Democrats will support the bill.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has begun the process of merging the Finance Committee bill and the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee bill. Senator Reid is hoping to have a bill on the floor by mid-October. He also said that the bill will include a compromise version of a public option.

*Look Ahead:*

On Monday, October 5 the Senate will convene at 2:00pm and will be in morning business until 4:00pm. At 4:00pm, the Senate will begin consideration of H.R. 2847, the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations bill for debate only. There will be no roll call votes on Monday.

On Tuesday, October 6 at a time to be determined, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3326, the Defense Appropriations bill.

**House**

The House leadership is continuing its work to craft a bill that bridges the divide among Democrats. The leadership is believed to be close to a deal on reducing the regional disparities in Medicare reimbursements rates. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) is also looking to find costs savings on a public option based on negotiated rates rather than Medicare. A public option with negotiated rates has support among moderate Democrats, but is determined by the CBO to save less than a public plan tied to Medicare.

## **Senate Hearings and Executive Sessions**

**Small Business and Entrepreneurship**

Reform Done Right: Sensible Health Care Solutions for America's Small Businesses

Full Committee Hearing

Oct. 8, 10:00am

Location TBA

## **House Hearings and Executive Sessions**

**Judiciary**

H.R. 3596, the "Health Insurance Industry Antitrust Enforcement Act of 2009"  
Courts and Competition Policy Subcommittee Hearing

Oct. 8, 11:30am

2141 Rayburn

## **Events**

**Health Cooperatives: A Viable Alternative to a Public Plan?**

October 6, 12:00-2:00pm, Hudson Institute, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, 1015 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW

The Hudson Institute's Center for Science in Public Policy will host a conference on "Health Cooperatives: A Viable Alternative to a Public Plan?"

For more information and to register, go to

[http://hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=HUDSON\\_upcoming\\_events&id=716](http://hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=HUDSON_upcoming_events&id=716).

**Critical Decisions: Health Care Reform at a Crossroads**

October 7, 8:00-9:30am, Liaison Capitol Hill Hotel, Metropolitan Ballroom, 415 New Jersey Ave NW

The National Journal Group will host a policy breakfast on "Critical Decisions: Health Care Reform at a Crossroads".

Participants:

- Kathleen Sebelius – Secretary of Health and Human Services
- Representative Tom Davis (R-VA)
- Former Representatives Vic Fazio (D-CA)
- Ronald Brownstein – Political Director, Atlantic Media
- Charlie Cook – Policy Analyst, National Journal

For more information and to register, go to <http://policybreakfast.eventbrite.com/>.

## **Administration Announcements**

### **HHS Awards \$46 Million in Recovery Act Funds to Create Jobs and Spur Economic Improvement**

On Wednesday, September 30, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded \$46 million to 84 grantees under a new program, the Strengthening Communities Fund (SCF), created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The purpose of the grants is to improve the ability of nonprofit organizations to promote the economic recovery of people with low incomes.

"We are pleased to support nonprofit organizations that train people to land and keep jobs, earn higher wages, and reach economic independence," said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. "This is what the Recovery Act was meant to do—provide the help people need to help themselves."

The Strengthening Communities Fund is comprised of two programs, both of which will boost the ability of community and faith-based organizations to handle

the broad economic recovery issues in their communities, including job training and retention and access to state and Federal benefits. All grants are one-time, two-year awards. The State, Local, and Tribal Government Capacity Building Program provides funds for government entities, which then in turn work with community-based organizations. The Nonprofit Capacity Building Program funds intermediary agencies, which also work with community organizations to enhance their economic recovery activities.

“The Strengthening Communities Fund is an important part of the overall recovery effort,” said Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, Carmen Nazario. “The activities funded under this program will fortify organizations in distressed communities so that they can improve their services to people who need jobs and opportunities to secure healthier, more prosperous futures.”

Under the State, Local, and Tribal Government Capacity Building Program, 29 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa are receiving awards between \$167,000 and \$250,000. Awardees include seven state governments, the District of Columbia, three U.S. territories, nine city governments, eight county governments, four tribal governments, and 18 nonprofit organizations that have been designated by governments as eligible to apply.

One of the grantees receiving funds under this part of the program is the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families in Madison. Wisconsin has been hit hard by the recession, and this project is directly focused on Recovery Act goals. The grantee will give training and technical assistance, education, and easily accessible information on Recovery Act opportunities to up to 500 organizations that serve the state’s most vulnerable populations

Under the Nonprofit Capacity Building Program, 35 applicants will receive grants between \$765,000 and \$1,000,000. Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph in Missouri is one noteworthy project in this category with a long history of providing training and technical assistance to nonprofits. Their use of this grant will increase the operational capacity of about 40 local organizations through comprehensive education, mentoring, and funding. Further, the project requires that each nonprofit sponsor one young person who will learn how to manage and grow these organizations, thus creating the next generation of nonprofit leadership.

Another project in this category is in Knoxville, Tennessee. The Knoxville Leadership Foundation will work with partners from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program as well as organizations focused on general economic recovery. Through a combination of direct funding and intensive technical assistance, the project will help 50 grassroots organizations improve their service to families in need of support.

“Faith and community-based organizations have been the backbone of strong neighborhoods for generations,” said Joshua DuBois, executive director, Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. “The Strengthening Communities Fund is an acknowledgement of their key role in reaching the goals of the Recovery Act by helping people weather tough economic times.”

For a complete list of grantees and amounts, go to:  
[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2009/scf\\_chart.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2009/scf_chart.html)

## In the News

### House, Senate Leaders Prepare for Floor Debate on Health Care

The long quest to reform the nation's health-care system entered uncharted legislative territory early Friday, October 2 when a key Senate panel wrapped up work on its bill and House and Senate leaders prepared for historic floor debates.

The Senate Finance Committee, the fifth and final congressional panel to contribute to the legislation, dispensed with its last amendment at 2:08 a.m., sending President Obama's top domestic policy initiative to a threshold that has eluded presidents since Harry S. Truman. As the panel completed the measure that is expected to form the backbone of health-insurance reform legislation, a political consensus large enough to carry the plan to final passage appeared to emerge.

In a statement issued early Friday, Obama hailed the bill authored by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, calling it "another milestone in our effort to pass health insurance reform." As a result of lawmakers' work, "we are now closer than ever before to finally passing reform that will offer security to those who have coverage and affordable insurance to those who don't," he said.

"We have a long way to go," Obama said, but he expressed confidence that Congress would pass a reform package "this year."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/02/AR2009100200457.html?hpid=topnews>