



Capitol News!

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Dear NASHIA Member,

Greetings! Welcome to this issue of *Capitol News!* After this week, Congress will be adjourning for the five-week August recess. This will be an excellent time to meet with members in their in-district offices, plus many members will attend county and state fairs, community forums and other "listening" posts to obtain input from their constituents. Keeping them informed of the needs of individuals with brain injury and their families is one way to impact policies and funding affecting brain injury rehabilitation and community services and supports.

For further information regarding NASHIA's public policy priorities, click on [Key Issues](#) housed on the NASHIA [webpage](#). These issues are also explained in NASHIA's [Public Policy Platform](#) adopted by the membership. For further information regarding NASHIA's public policy work, contact publicpolicy@nashia.org.

This Week in Congress

Congress is working this week on several issues before adjourning for the August recess. With July soon to end, Congress needs to extend funding for highways and transit systems, which, unless passed, is set to expire this month. The U.S. Senate met Sunday and voted down the repeal of the Affordable Care Act as an amendment to the transportation bill. The Senate continues to work on a six year funding for highways and transportation, which differs from the U.S. House of Representatives bill passed earlier to extend funding for five months. Meanwhile, the House is to take up a bill to authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to fire or demote employees on basis of poor performance or misconduct. Another proposal which may become before the House is a bill for VA to develop a plan to pool provider programs at facilities outside of the agency's system into a single program known as the Veterans Choice Program.



FY 2016 Appropriations

Will Congress Pass FY 2016 Appropriation Bills?

The last issue of *Capitol News* reported on the House and Senate Committees' recommendations for federal spending for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education and Related Agencies. This week, House Speaker John Boehner mentioned that it may be necessary to pass a continuing resolution in September to fund federal programs starting the new fiscal year on October 1 in absence of passage of appropriation bills. While the House and Senate

Appropriations committees have approved all the 12 fiscal 2016 annual spending bills, the full House has passed only six. In the Senate, Democrats blocked the defense spending bill and no other appropriations bills that have been brought to the floor for consideration. The Democrats are concerned that the defense bill doesn't reflect sequestration spending limits, which were applied to domestic programs. They want any increases in defense spending to be accompanied by corresponding increases in domestic spending. Thus, there is an impasse with regard to appropriation bills to fund federal government.

Other Legislation

The House Passes the Steve Gleason Act

The House of Representatives passed the Steve Gleason Act of 2015 that allows for the immediate purchase and transfer of ownership for speech-generating devices (SGDs) to the Medicare beneficiary and removes SGDs from Medicare capped-rental requirements. Introduced by Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), the bill ensures coverage of eye-tracking technology that allows individuals with extremely limited voluntary muscle control to effectively use SGDs to communicate their personal and health care needs.

The Senate Passes ESEA

Week before last, the Senate passed the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015, S. 117, which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind law. Co-sponsored by Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN), and Patty Murray (D-WA), the bill eliminates the current accountability system, known as adequate yearly progress, and allows States to create their own systems instead. The proposal would maintain the annual federal testing schedule, every year in math and reading in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school, and grade-span testing in science. But it would also provide some flexibility on testing through a limited pilot program that would allow States and school districts to develop innovative assessments.

The House has already passed its version, H.R. 5, the Student Success Act, so the two chambers can now begin working on ironing out their differences. Unlike the House bill, the Senate bill would not allow Title I dollars for low-income students to follow them to the school of their choice, a policy known as portability. H.R. 5 also reduces the accountability for students with disabilities, removes the 95% participation rate for all students; removes the 1% cap on alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards; lacks focus on professional development; eliminates highly qualified teachers programs; includes performance pay that is solely based from standardized test scores; increases privatization; ignores high-ability students; eliminates maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements; permits Title I portability provisions; ignores early childhood; allows parents to opt out of State tests; and includes new requirements without adequate resources.

The Senate Passes the Older Americans Act Reauthorization

On July 16th, the Senate passed S. 192, the Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization of 2015, which authorizes funding for a range of home and community-based services, such as meals-on-wheels and other nutrition programs, in-home services, transportation, legal services, elder abuse prevention and caregivers support for seniors and for individuals with disabilities. The original OAA established the Administration on Aging (AoA) and the aging services network that provides home and community-based services. AoA is now part of the Administration for Community Living (ACL) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This month marks the 50th anniversary of the Older Americans Act, which was signed in 1965. NASHIA submitted [testimony](#) on behalf of the bill. The OAA has been due for reauthorization since 2011.



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