



Capitol News!

by the
**National Association of State Head
Injury Administrators**

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Dear NASHIA Member,

Welcome to *Capitol News!* The 116th Congress reconvened in January and has spent most of its time on extending appropriations for those federal agencies whose funding had lapsed. After a partial government shutdown, Congress extended funding to these agencies through Feb. 15.

Meanwhile, NASHIA has scheduled a public policy webinar on Fri., Feb. 22, to review current issues before Congress. Titled, "*Capitol News Live!*," the webinar will also cover activities planned by the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force for Awareness Day to be held March 13. Information has been sent to NASHIA Members regarding the Awareness Day and will continue to be sent as plans finalize regarding this important day to promote awareness and to learn more about federal programs and initiatives taking place with regard to brain injury. If you are planning to attend and wish help with any office visits, please feel free to contact Becky Corby, NASHIA Governmental Relations, at rcorby@ridgepolicygroup.com.

NASHIA's public policy staff are preparing materials for Awareness Day, which will be made available prior to March 13, and also that day. The Public Policy Platform for the 116th Congress is now available. Our "asks" with regard to federal funding and other legislative requests are being formulated and will be made available soon. We will also be asking NASHIA Members to encourage their Congressional Members to join the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force. Stay tuned for further information!

This Week in Congress

The House of Representatives and Senate are hoping to finalize funding for the remaining governmental programs beyond Feb. 15. In addition, House and Senate Committees have been holding hearings on an array of health care issues, including opioid crisis, drug pricing, coverage for pre-existing conditions, and so forth. Both the House and the Senate are on recess next week and will be in their home districts.



FY 2019 Appropriations

Congress to Vote on Another Funding Bill to Keep Government Open

On January 25th, President Trump signed a short-term funding bill to open federal government with regard to those agencies which had not been funded through the fiscal year for three weeks. Congress is working on a measure to extend funding beyond midnight, Feb. 15, in order to prevent another shut-down. House and Senate negotiators have been working on legislation to extend funding through Sept. 30, 2019. The Omnibus spending bill affects these federal agencies and programs: Agriculture, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Financial Services, Interior-Environment, State and Foreign Operations, and Commerce-Justice-Science, and Homeland Security.

While funding for the border wall has been the main headline, another sticking point has been the

extension of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA-related grant programs are funded through the appropriations for the Department of Justice, which is included in the bill. However, House Democrats introduced legislation last summer to expand the scope of the law, including a provision to prohibit persons convicted of dating violence and stalking and those under protective orders from possessing firearms. Rather than reauthorize the program, Democrats wish to introduce separate legislation to expand the program, since existing programs will be funded by the Omnibus bill.

Efforts to further extend the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which is funded through June 30, were also dropped. The Senate is to vote today on the bill and the House tonight. Both the House and Senate are adjourning for recess next week.

Bills Signed

President Signs Bills to Extend MFP and TANF

The President signed H.R. 259, the Medicaid Extenders Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-3), which extends the Medicaid Money Follows the Person (MFP) Rebalancing demonstration program for three months and also extends protection for Medicaid recipients of home and community-based services (HCBS) against spousal impoverishment on Jan. 24th. Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) sponsored the bill. The MFP provides grants to States to help individuals voluntarily transition from an institutional setting to a community care setting.

The President also signed H.R. 430, the TANF Extension Act of 2019, which extends Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Child Care Entitlements, and other Department of Health and Human Services grant programs through June 30, 2019. Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA) introduced the legislation. TANF, which is time limited, assists families with children when the parents or other responsible relatives cannot provide for the family's basic needs. The Federal government provides grants to States to run the program.

Other Legislation

Lawmakers Introduce Transformation to Competitive Employment Bills

Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) and Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA) have introduced legislation to phase out sub-minimum wage for individuals with disabilities. Known as the Transformation to Competitive Employment Act (S.260/H.R.873), the legislation provides funding to support States and employment to transform and expand business models to support individuals with disabilities in competitive integrated employment.

Advocates Push for Passage of the Disability Integration Act Bill

Disability advocates and bill sponsors held a press conference in January to celebrate the introduction of the Disability Integration Act that would affirm the rights of people with disabilities and seniors who need long-term services and supports to live in the community in lieu of institutional services. Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) introduced H.R.555 and Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) introduced S.115 to promote community integration.

Representative introduces Concussion Awareness Bill

Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-OH) has introduced H.R. 280, the Concussion Awareness and Education Act of 2019, similar to legislation she has introduced in past sessions. The legislation is in response to the report produced by the National Academies entitled "Sports-Related Concussions in Youth: Improving the Science, Changing the Culture." The legislation calls for establishing and overseeing a national system to accurately determine the incidence of sports-related concussions among youth, as well as research to create evidence-based guidelines for the management of short-long-term sequela of concussion youth.

Hearings and Briefings

Congressional Brain Injury Task Awareness Day

Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ), Co-chair of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, has issued invitations to individuals and organizations to participate in the Awareness Day activities planned for March 13 at the Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC. The events are free and open to all and provide an excellent opportunity to network with federal and national agencies to learn more about prevention, research, treatment and community initiatives. The briefing theme is "Living Well with Brain Injury." If you are interested in learning more, you may contact Becky Corby, NASHIA Governmental Relations, at rcorby@ridgepolicygroup.com.

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*The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators assists State government
in promoting partnerships and building systems to meet the needs
of individuals with brain injuries and their families.*