



Capitol News!

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Dear Member,

Welcome to *Capitol News!* In this issue you will find information on current legislative activity. Meanwhile, NASHIA continues to solicit co-sponsors for H.R. 1098, the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Reauthorization Act of 2013 and asks members and friends to join us in that effort. For further information on H.R. 1098 and other key issues visit the NASHIA website Congress, including appropriation bills. For further information on H.R. 1098 and other key issues visit the [NASHIA website](#).

This Week in Congress

Congress returned to Washington Tuesday, after the Veterans Day weekend. Today, the House passed legislation to let insurers keep offering health insurance plans that do not meet the standards of the 2010 health law for another year if they were providing coverage in the individual market on January 1, 2013. This week the Senate passed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act that would prohibit employers, employment agencies, labor organizations and others from discrimination on the basis of an individual's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.



Budget and Appropriations

Budget Conference Committee

The Budget Conference Committee, appointed to create a long-term budget plan by December 13th in order to avoid another government shutdown, has met twice. Senate Budget Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) and Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) co-chair the committee and are charged with reconciling the differences between the House and Senate approved budget resolutions. These differences include continuing sequestration or across the board cuts, changes to entitlement programs, and taxes (closing loopholes) for increased revenues.

There are significant differences in the House and Senate budgets. The Senate budget protects Medicare as is, while the House version would change the Medicare program by providing coupons for private health insurance. The House budget also repeals the Affordable Care Act and would eliminate 24 million Americans from receiving Medicaid. The House would eliminate grants for up to 1 million college students while the Senate plan protects Pell grants. The Senate budget calls for new revenue while the House version would provide trillions of dollars in tax breaks mainly for the wealthiest Americans and profitable corporations offset by increased taxes on the middle class.

Committee chairs have said they intend to focus on replacing sequestration (in whole or in part) for the next year or two with alternative deficit-reduction measures. Should the committee fail in negotiating a budget, a second round of cuts will take place in January.

Many programs are feeling the impact of sequestration cuts instituted on March 1st of this year. For example, State and local housing agencies are facing substantial shortfalls in funding to renew the Housing Choice Vouchers that more than 2.1 million low-income households use to rent modest private-market housing at an affordable cost. If Congress does not cancel sequestration as part of an agreement to fund the government beyond January 2014, agencies will continue to face shortfalls, and the resulting hardships for low-income families will worsen considerably in the year ahead.

CBO Reports that Federal Deficit is Lowest Since 2008

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [reported](#) that the deficit for FY 2013 is \$680 billion, \$409 billion less than for FY 2012. This is the first time since 2008 that the deficit was under \$1 trillion. As a share of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP), the deficit declined from 6.8 percent in 2012 to 4.1 percent in 2013. Net spending by the government was \$84 billion less in 2013 than in 2012, and it was lower than outlays in any year since 2008. It amounted to 20.8 percent of GDP in 2013, lower than the 22.0 percent recorded in 2012, but still above the 40-year average of 20.4 percent.

Other Legislation

Affordable Care Act

Today, the House passed H.R. 3350, Keep Your Health Plan Act of 2013, proposed by Rep Fred Upton (R-MI) that allows individuals to keep their health insurance policies that do not meet Affordable Care Act (ACA) minimum coverage if the policy was issued between January 1, 2013 and 2014. The bill passed by a vote of 261-157, with 17 members abstaining.

Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) is proposing legislation known as the "Keeping the Affordable Care Act Promise Act", which would allow people to keep their current health care plans and require insurance companies to provide information about their plans in terms of which parts do not meet the minimum requirements.

Meanwhile, House Committees continue to hold hearings to review the launch of HealthCare.gov and to inquire Administration officials about the problems with the website. On Tuesday, Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) called on the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to stop the use of navigators who provide in-person assistance to people seeking to enroll in new health-care plans. He said that he had reports that some navigators might have encouraged people to lie on application forms. Other senators are asking HHS to extend the open enrollment period in order to give people more time since the website is still being fixed.

Older Americans Act

On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee passed the Older Americans Reauthorization Act of 2013, S. 1562, without amendment. Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) offered an amendment to change the funding formula for Older Americans Act programs. The amendment was defeated, but Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the committee, pledged to create a bipartisan working group to explore the issue. NASHIA submitted a support [letter](#) to Senator Bernie Sanders (D-VT), bill sponsor.

Disability Treaty

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held the first of two hearings to discuss the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on Tuesday, November 5. Speaking on behalf of ratification were: Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), who read a letter from former Senator Bob Dole (R-KS); Senator Mark Kirk (R-IL), former Secretary of Homeland Security and current chair of the

National Council on Disability Tom Ridge; Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth (D-WI); and former Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, who mentioned that he had a son with a brain injury as the result of a car crash. Individuals who testified in opposition were: Michael Farris, Chairman of the Home School Legal Defense Association, and Susan Yoshihara, of the Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute.

The second hearing has been rescheduled for this Thursday, November 21 at 9:30 am (ET) in Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room G-50. Secretary of State John Kerry will be a witness in this important hearing, among others. NASHIA submitted a letter in support of ratification of the treaty.

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in promoting partnerships and building systems to meet the needs
of individuals with brain injuries and their families.*

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