

### **Federal Health Care Reform Activity:**

The week of June 1<sup>st</sup> was a very busy week in health care reform. On Tuesday President Obama convened a meeting of Senate Democrats to discuss health care reform. During the meeting Mr. Obama affirmed his support for the creation of a government-sponsored health insurance plan, but he acknowledged that such a plan would sharply reduce the chances for Republican support of legislation to overhaul the health care system. In addition to discussing his priorities, President Obama set forth a timeline, calling on Congress to send him a comprehensive health care bill by October. In order to meet the President's timeline the Senate and House of Representatives will be working furiously throughout the summer. The Senate Finance and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committees have yet to release draft legislative language, however they produced draft policy papers that provide a general outline for their legislative proposals. Both Committees are tentatively scheduled to debate legislation the weeks of June 8<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>. While the House of Representative's schedule is unclear, both the House and Senate plan to vote on legislation before the August recess (before the week of August 10<sup>th</sup>).

To date, Senators Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Ranking Member of the Finance Committee, Mike Enzi (R-WY), Ranking Member of the HELP Committee, and some of their Republican colleagues have been active participants in their Committees' efforts to produce legislation; other Republicans in the Senate and House have been relatively silent on what they would like to see in health reform. Today, however, reports indicate that Republican frustration with Democratic plans to remake the health care system boiled over Thursday, due to the size, shape and cost of the emerging proposal. But Democratic leaders said they still intended to push a bill through the Senate this summer (Robert Pear, *New York Times* 5/5/09).

### **What You Can Do:**

The Academy's members play a vital role in advocating for the health and well being of all children, and will be vitally important in the health care reform debate. As the summer progresses, we will be in touch with specific information based on targeted districts.

In the meantime, as mentioned in Monday's email, chapters and members can make a difference right now by getting involved in federal activity:

- Given many Academy chapters' close relationships with members of Congress; we would encourage pediatricians to schedule meetings and/or calls with their representatives during recess. Resources for such meetings will be provided upon request by the Department of Federal Affairs.
- Health Care Reform Fact Sheets: The Academy's Health Care Reform fact sheets are available on both the AAP Member Center and public website. The fact sheets reflect the Academy's priorities for reform, and serve as an invaluable resource for meetings with representatives and advocacy events.

- Sign-on letters: To follow up on a national sign on letters distributed to members of Congress, the Washington office will be drafting state specific letters for interested chapters. Sign on letters enable organizations to present members with concise messaging regarding the importance of providing all children with access to appropriate high quality care. Interested chapters can have chapter leadership and pediatricians sign on to the letter to distribute to representatives from the state.
- Media Opportunities: Consider drafting and submitting an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor to your local paper. Legislators pay attention to the opinions expressed by constituents and local publications. The Academy has several communications resources on its web site, and the Department of Federal Affairs' Communications Department would be happy to assist in reviewing any content.