

## **Action Alert from National APSE 11/6/2009**

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### **Support Health Care Reform for People with Disabilities**

#### **Call Your Representative NOW**

*APSE urges its members to contact their Representative to ask for their support in ensuring that the Affordable Health Care for America Act is passed.*

Health care reform is a marathon, not a sprint. There are many steps in the process to overhaul our nation's troubled health care system. This is why we have asked you so many times to contact your Members of Congress. And today, we need to ask you once again.

#### **Why Now?**

The House of Representatives' first full vote on health reform legislation (the Affordable Health Care for America Act, H.R. 3962") may come as early as this week. It'll be the first time in more than 60 years that the full House votes on comprehensive reform and the vote may be very close.

#### **What is in the House Bill that Will Help People with Disabilities?**

A whole lot. The most important provisions in the bill that benefit people with disabilities are:

Major insurance market reforms such as the elimination of discrimination based on health status, a prohibition on pre-existing condition exclusions, guaranteed issue and renewal requirements, and elimination of annual and lifetime caps;

Creation of a high-risk pool to provide immediate assistance to those currently uninsured with pre-existing conditions before insurance market reforms are implemented;

Inclusion of critical services for people with disabilities in the new Health Insurance Exchange's essential benefits package such as rehabilitation and habilitation services, durable medical equipment (e.g. wheelchairs), prosthetics, orthotics and related supplies, vision and hearing services, equipment and supplies for children under 21 years of age, behavioral health treatment, and mental health and substance abuse services in compliance with the Wellstone-Domenici parity law;

Inclusion of the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act, a new actuarially sound, premium-based, national long term services insurance program to help adults with severe functional impairments to remain independent, employed, and a part of their communities, without having to impoverish themselves to become eligible for Medicaid;

Inclusion of a statement of support for the Community First Choice Option to encourage states to cover Medicaid community-based attendant services and supports (this was included in the manager's amendment);

Significant investments in Medicaid to dramatically expand eligibility, including EPSDT services for millions of children, increased reimbursement for physicians to Medicare rates with significant federal funding to offset the burden on states, and a six month-extension of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's increase to the federal share of Medicaid spending;

Substantial federal subsidies and out-of-pocket limits to make coverage as affordable as possible;

A two-year extension of the exceptions process to the Medicare therapy caps on physical, occupational, and speech and language therapies;

Requirements for the development of standards for accessible diagnostic and other medical equipment;

Inclusion of "disability" as a category for purposes of health disparities;

Inclusion of "disability" as a subpopulation in the provisions regarding Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER); and

Provision of wellness grants that prohibit the use of discriminatory incentives.

### **Why Should You Take Action?**

With just a few days before the vote, the insurance industry and their allies are putting extraordinary pressure on every representative to defeat the health care reform bill. Every day there are hundreds of insurance company lobbyists on Capitol Hill working to defeat it.

Fortunately, the people who matter most to Members of Congress are the people who elected them - their constituents.

*Can you call your representative right now and tell him/her to vote in favor of real health insurance reform?* If they don't hear from you, they will think that you don't care and then they will listen to the industry lobbyists that they are hearing from everyday.

### **What Should You Do?**

Visit <http://house.gov/> to find your Representative's telephone number. Then make the call. All you need to say is "Please vote for H.R. 3962 - the Affordable Health Care for America Act."

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