



The 2008 NACHC Policy and Issues Forum wrapped up with a record attendance of over two thousand health center advocates from coast to coast and as far away as American Samoa.

Advocates descended on Capitol Hill to meet with Members of Congress and urge their support for critical health center policies – including House and Senate Dear Colleague letters calling for an increase of \$248 million in health center funding for next year. So far the Health Center Appropriation letters have garnered 42 cosigners on the Stabenow – Bond Senate letter and 154 cosigners on the Pallone - Deal letter circulating in the House. Although the number of cosigners is climbing, there's still work to be done to gather additional support while Congress is on recess. Visit the NACHC [web site](#) to see if your Member of Congress has signed on to the letter and to [send them a message](#) asking them to sign on if they have not done so already.

Lawmakers' call for a boost in health center funding come just as the House and Senate pass \$3 trillion fiscal year 2009 budget resolutions (H. Con. Res. 312 and S. Con. Res. 70).

The measures not only increase spending on health care and other domestic programs, but also crush the President's tax cuts. The House budget resolution, which narrowly passed on a 212-207 vote, crosses the line in the sand drawn by President Bush on spending limits by including an additional \$25.4 billion. The Senate budget resolution passed on a 51-44 vote and exceeded the President's limit by \$21.8 billion. Neither budget resolution included the \$196 billion in spending reductions for Medicare and Medicaid that the President has been pressing as a way to trim a ballooning federal deficit. The federal budget deficit in the first five months of fiscal year (FY) 2008 reached \$263.3 billion, a 62% increase from the same period in FY 2007, according to the Treasury Department. The big ticket spending items include Health and Human Services programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid, at \$292.9 billion; Social Security at \$270.5 billion, and the military at \$247.6 billion. Stay tuned for what is sure to be a serious budget battle to come!

The absence of any Medicare spending cuts didn't stop Bush Administration officials from being on point when discussing fiscal matters at NACHC's Policy & Issues Forum.

Kerry Weems, Acting Administrator of the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) (CMS), warned health center leaders during a P & I general session that *"11 years from now, the Medicare fund will be exhausted."* Weems cited inflated health care costs as a factor as well as a misguided emphasis on paying health care bills rather than promoting health prevention and keeping costs down. Weems also said that thanks to recent studies on the benefits of access to primary care showing lower hospitalizations and health care costs, *"the concept of the medical home has taken on more energy."*

A recent NACHC Congressional Briefing on ACCESS for All America is helping to build more energy around the medical home model.

The briefing, attended by Congressional staff, federal officials and media, officially rolled out the health center plan to serve 30 million patients by the year 2015. The briefing highlighted a new report, *"ACCESS CAPITAL: New Opportunities for Meeting America's Primary Care Infrastructure Needs"* which documents that health centers will require \$10.5 billion in financing to achieve the goals of the ACCESS plan. You can read the [press release here](#), or check out the [web cast](#) of the briefing online!

More updates on the new HPSA rule.

After nearly a decade of considering them, HRSA last week published a [new set of proposed rules](#) for the designation of Medically Underserved Areas or Populations (MUPs) and Health Professions Shortage Areas (HPSAs). The newly proposed regulations would revise and consolidate the criteria and processes for designating MUPs and HPSAs, which are used today to determine eligibility for several federal programs, including Section 330 Health Center grant. [Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt](#) wants the matter resolved as quickly as possible, according to Elizabeth Duke, HRSA Administrator. Duke spoke at the recently held NACHC's P&I conference and told the audience at the general session that it was unlikely the current 60 day comment period on the new rule could be extended to 90 days. "The secretary is dedicated to getting it done and getting it done under the timeline," said Duke. Look for additional updates coming soon.

Quote of the Week

"When you look at change, it comes about when one side concedes the principle for the practical. You need an amazing partnership... a little 'razzle dazzle.' I don't think the metaphor of fighting works anymore [in politics]. I think the genius is the guy who gets it done without a fight and makes it look easy."

--Chris Matthews, Host, MSNBC Hardball, speaking at the NACHC 200 Policy and Issues Forum, on health care reform and politics.