



Capitol Focus

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Politics Online: Fast & Updated Information

How to Contact Your Legislator:

- .. Go to www.cahsa.org.
- .. Click on "Contact your Legislator" in the left-side menu.
- .. Click on "My Elected Officials."
- .. Enter your address.
- .. Click on the link for your legislator. Their contact information will be displayed.

Capitol Focus is a weekly activities summary of the Colorado Legislature for CAHSA members, provided by staff of the Colorado Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. Contact Laura Landwirth, executive director, at cahsa@cahsa.org.



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What's new at the Capitol?

What is the Governor up to?

Who are my legislators?

This week the "Long Bill" was completed and balanced. Next up is formal passage of the bill. Now that the budget is completed for FY 2010-11 the Appropriations Committees are busy acting on bills that have been waiting their turn. As a result, we don't have new updates on many of our priority bills including HB 1053. Instead, I am providing you with a "Washington Update" received today from AAHSA staff Barbara Gay, including an attachment AAHSA has prepared with an update on all of the issues they are monitoring on behalf of members.

According to Barbara, time already is growing short for this Congress. Their next big project of interest to us needs to be passage of the appropriations bills for fiscal year 2011. Medicare and Medicaid are not subject to this process, but appropriations are key to funding for senior housing and home- and community-based services. Some hearings on appropriations already have been held; we expect to see bills generating in the House in the June-July timeframe.

We anticipate that Congress will adjourn in early October to give legislators lots of time to campaign in what we expect will be hard-fought mid-term elections. It is then pretty certain that the lame duck Congress will return in December to finish up issues that may have been too hot to handle with everyone in campaign mode.

We're not sure what the prospects are for any remaining Medicare legislation this year. It seems likely that technical corrections to health care reform will wait until the next Congress, when legislators and stakeholders have had a chance to find all, or at least some of the issues that need to be fixed. On the other hand, there are some Medicare issues – the physician fee schedule, the therapy caps exceptions process – that will require more action before the first of next year. So we're still in a TBD situation on these issues.

For those of you seeking information on Health Care Reform, AAHSA has posted several items on their Health Reform Hub to provide you with the information you need about the new health care reform law. These materials include a one-page fact sheet on the highlights of the new law and a more detailed summary. In brief, the recently enacted Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) will affect aging services providers, their staff, and the people they serve in a multitude of ways. Some of the highlights of the new law:

- Preservation of Medicare 2010 and 2011 payment updates for skilled nursing facilities.
 - Extension of Medicare therapy caps exceptions process through **Dec. 31, 2010**.
 - CLASS plan to reform financing of long-term services and supports.
 - Government Accountability Office study and report on nursing home five-star rating system.
 - Demonstration projects on culture change and on the application of technology in nursing homes.
 - Expansion of Medicaid coverage of home and community-based services.
 - Gradual closing of the Medicare prescription drug doughnut hole.
- Increased funding for nurse training and geriatric training for health care professionals, and new training opportunities for direct care workers.

As AAHSA continues to learn more about the potential impact of the law on aging services providers they will post information on their Health Reform Hub.