



October 1, 2009

Dear Doctors for America Member,

This past week was an important one for health reform with key votes in the Senate Finance Committee concerning the public option, physician payment, a number of other issues. While the Senate Finance bill is only one input into an emerging reform bill, this week's discussions are an important preview of some of the issues that are going to drive the debate in Congress as we progress towards a final bill, in the next 6-8 weeks.

It's important to remember that legislation can still be influenced during that time. That is why it's critical that we do everything we can in the weeks ahead to contact Congress and build public support for strong legislation.

Physicians Making A Difference:

Highlights from the last week

- Dr. Javeed Sukhera (NY) helped organize a physician-patient town hall in [Buffalo, NY](#) with Dr. David Holmes and Dr. Myron Glick
- Dr. Soyun Kim (CA) held a health reform button-making party in Los Angeles to plan advocacy events in Southern California
- Dr. Lisa Plymate (WA) drove 270 miles to Walla Walla, Washington to speak to state democratic chairs about health reform.
- Dr. George Bahadue (FL) met with Congressman Ron Klein's staff
- Dr. Elaine Bradshaw (NM) published a moving op-ed in the [Albuquerque Journal](#)
- Dr. Scott Poppen (UT) became the Doctors for America State Director for Utah
- Dr. Stephen Patrick (MI) published an op-ed in [USA Today](#)
- Over 750 DFA members pushed the Senate Finance Committee to make affordability and accessibility key parts of the health reform bill.

Key Policy Developments

1. The Senate Finance Committee Votes Against Two Public Option Amendments

The Committee rejected an amendment from Sen. Rockefeller (D-WV), which would provide a public option with payments to physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers based on Medicare rates, 15 to 8, and one from Sen. Schumer (D-NY), which would allow the Secretary of HHS to negotiate rates, 13 to 10.

The Committee has yet to consider likely amendments from Senator Snowe (R-ME) which would introduce a public option with a trigger and Senator Carper (D-DE) which would give states a choice of three mechanisms, including a public option, to increase coverage.

The Finance Committee is expected to conclude consideration of its bill next week. The inclusion of a public option is now set to be one of a number of issues taken up again as the Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid begins work on merging the Finance Committee's bill with the earlier bill from the HELP committee.



Top 3 Stories

- New York Times - [Health Debate Basics](#)
- Washington Post - [How the Bills Stack Up](#)
- NEJM - [Physician Support for a Public Option](#)

What you can do this week

Amidst the ups and downs of the amendment process, there's an important thing to remember about what we're doing. Most of this country, Congress included, think that doctors don't care. They think that doctors are comfortable in the health system and don't need the system to improve. By getting involved you're changing that.

We have two easy ways you can make that difference.

- **Post a flier:** 500,000 physicians support reform. Physician groups representing over 500,000 physicians joined together this week to put out a print ad in support of reform. [Post this flier](#) on your Facebook page, on your blog, and in your clinic to spread the word.

- **Send an email or make a call to Congress.** Let them know today and every day how important reform is to you and your patients. Our [contact congress](#) page will help.

Key Policy Developments (continued)

2. Improvements to Affordability on the Way

Responding to pressure from a number of groups, including Doctors for America, Chairman Max Baucus is [reportedly considering](#) additional amendments to address affordability concerns in the Finance Committee bill. These include amendments from both Democrats and Republicans that would mitigate penalties for those who fail to obtain insurance if insurance is not affordable and stronger assistance for lower income families.

3. Senators Vote on Amendments that Affect Physician Payments

By a margin of 23-0, the Senate approved an amendment sponsored by Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) that will provide additional funding to help defray the payment differences between providers in rural communities and those practicing in more heavily populated ones. The committee rejected an amendment to eliminate the SGR, instead keeping its one-year elimination in place. The committee also continued to support the inclusion of a new independent Medicare Commission (IMAC/MedPAC) with control over Medicare payment rates.

Please let us know what you think about these weekly summaries - we're open to suggestions!

Sincerely,

Milan de Vries and the Doctors for America Team