



ASN Health and Nutrition Public Policy Newsletter September 5, 2007

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

Congress returns from August recess with a heavy agenda

Congress returned this week from its month-long August recess with an ambitious agenda. With five weeks to go before the Columbus Day recess (the week of Oct. 8) and four weeks until the end of the federal fiscal year (Sept. 30), the Senate in particular faces an uphill battle to get “must-pass” legislation completed.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid outlined his chamber’s packed agenda on Tuesday, which includes efforts to get the 11 remaining appropriations bills passed. He acknowledged that Congress will not meet the Oct. 1 deadline for enacting all the FY 2008 appropriations bills, which means there likely will be a continuing resolution (CR). President Bush continues to issue a veto threat over spending bills that exceed his budget proposal, and sources already are suggesting that remaining appropriations bill may be rolled into a larger package, or “omnibus” bill. The Senate is expected to confirm former Rep. Jim Nussle to be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). In this position, Nussle will be the President’s key budget negotiator with Congress. Currently, congressional appropriations bills exceed the President’s budget proposal for discretionary spending by \$23 billion.

Other top legislative priorities include completion of three reauthorizations: the Farm Bill, the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) overhaul legislation. Both SCHIP and the Farm Bill are set to expire Sept. 30.

Further complicating the schedule is the expected report next week on the war in Iraq by Gen. David Petraeus and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, followed by a report from the White House that is due Sept. 15. Congress also will consider a war supplemental to provide additional funding for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Senate expected to mark up Farm Bill this month

The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee aims to mark up its version of the 2007 Farm Bill during the week of Sept. 17th, according to sources on Capitol Hill. While portions of the bill, including drafts of the Research Title, have been circulated by staff, Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) plans to release a complete proposal any day now. The draft Research title includes language supported by ASN to reauthorize and reaffirm national nutrition monitoring activities, and it also includes promising language with regard to the creation a National Institute for Food and Agriculture at the USDA.

The House passed its version of the Farm Bill on July 27. While the bill includes some provisions that ASN supports, including nutrition monitoring language, it falls far short of what is needed to boost food, nutrition and agriculture research at USDA in a meaningful way.

Sources on Capitol Hill tell ASN that although a short-term extension of the 2002 Farm Bill will be necessary, the goal is to send the bill to the President’s desk before the end of the year.

Long-Term Budget Outlook Still ‘Daunting’

The Congressional Budget Office’s (CBO) recent report shows that increases in tax revenues have lowered the deficit slightly more than previously thought; however, the long-term budget outlook “remains daunting.” CBO projects that the government will be \$158 billion in the red in 2007, \$19 billion less than predicted in March. The agency named additional revenues, mostly from individual income taxes, as the reason for the

more positive picture. However, despite the short-term improvement, CBO predicts that in 2009 and 2010 the deficit will begin to rise.

“Over the long term, the budget remains on an unsustainable path,” CBO said. “Unless changes are made to current policies, growing demand for resources caused by rising health care costs and the nation’s expanding elderly population will put increasing pressure on the budget.” For more information, please visit [the CBO website](#).

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

President’s Cancer Panel Issues Report on Healthy Lifestyles

The President’s Cancer Panel, a division of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), released [Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: Policy, Program, and Personal Recommendations for Reducing Cancer Risk](#). The report summarizes results from panel meetings conducted between September 2006 and February 2007 that examined evidence linking diet, nutrition, physical activity, tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure to cancer risk and assessed ongoing and prospective efforts to reduce the national cancer burden by promoting healthier lifestyles. The report notes that the impact of obesity on America’s health rivals that of tobacco use in terms of morbidity and related health risks. To improve residents’ lifestyle habits and reduce cancer risk, the report authors urge collaboration among governments, private and public agencies, industries, educators and individuals. The report contains a call for more effective oversight of food marketing, as well as coordinated efforts to educate children and adults about healthy eating habits aimed at preventing cancer, cardiac disease and diabetes. The report also suggests that physicians step up efforts to educate patients about the importance of weight management and that employers promote wellness among employees by removing barriers to healthy eating and increasing staff members’ access to affordable, nutritious food options. For more information, please visit the [RWJF Website](#).

Closure of FDA Laboratories Canceled

Plans to close over half of the 13 FDA field laboratories have been put on hold. Industry, consumers and politicians’ disapproval of the closures due to recent food safety scares influenced the decision. The decision change comes before a Presidential panel reports its findings to the FDA on September 17.

FDA oversees 80 percent of foods used in field labs and inspects and analyzes food, drugs, medical devices, and other health products, as well as animal feed and medicines, for contamination. For more information, please visit [foodproductiondaily.com](#).

Eight New Members Join NIH Peer Review Advisory Committee

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Peer Review Advisory Committee has eight new members. This committee provides technical and scientific advice on matters related to the procedures and policies governing the scientific and technical evaluation of NIH grant applications. The Advisory Committee meets 2 – 3 times a year and advises the NIH Director, NIH Deputy Director for NIH Extramural Research and the Director of the NIH Center for Scientific Review.

The following new members join the NIH Peer Review Advisory Committee:

- R. Lorraine Collins, Ph.D.
- Garret FitzGerald, M.D.
- Heidi Hamm, Ph.D.
- Story Landis, Ph.D.
- Jane Steinberg, Ph.D.
- Jill Buyon, M.D.
- Paulette Gray, Ph.D.
- Andrew Murray, Ph.D.

For more information, please visit the [NIH Press Room](#).

New Vitamin D Evidence Report Is Foundation for Upcoming NIH Conference on Bone Health

This week the NIH is hosting a conference, *Vitamin D and Health in the 21st Century: An Update*, to examine a range of scientific perspectives related to vitamin D and bone health across the lifecycle. A new independent, systematic review conducted by the NIH's Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) will be used as the foundation for this conference. The [review](#) highlights the fact that the largest body of evidence for bone health benefits is in postmenopausal women and older men (the majority over 60 years of age) taking vitamin D supplements. According to the review, vitamin D from ultraviolet-B (sunlight) exposure, fortified foods, or dietary supplements are all effective in raising the level of circulating vitamin D; however, it is difficult to define specific blood levels markers for vitamin D status that indicate optimal levels for bone health because current methods yield highly inconsistent results. For more information on the report and the conference, please visit the [NIH Press Room](#).

ASN is a sponsoring society for the conference. See ASN's [press release](#) and [recent Vitamin D studies](#) published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* and the *Journal of Nutrition*.

Healthy People 2020 update

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is in the initial planning stages for the Healthy People 2020, the next set of national disease prevention and health promotion objectives. As envisioned, Healthy People 2020 will continue and improve on the efforts of Healthy People 2010, by identifying and seeking to reduce the most significant preventable threats to health. Using elements of a National Opinion Research Center report, "Assessment of the Healthy People Objectives-setting Framework and Process," overarching goals will include:

- Promote optimal health in order to end preventable death, illness, injury, and disability;
- Eliminate health disparities;
- Make wellness a way of life for individuals and their communities;
- Promote healthy places and environments.

The establishment of a framework and objectives will be informed by a variety of sources—a Federal interagency workgroup, regional meetings across the country, and public comment periods—aimed at ensuring active input from public and private stakeholders. The development of an overall framework for Healthy People 2020 is expected to be completed by January 2009, with the release of the objectives to follow in January 2010. For more information, please visit www.healthypeople.gov.

Opportunities in community-based participatory prevention research

Community-based participatory research helps speed the translation of research findings into health practices by engaging members of the community as equal partners in all aspects of research. In community-based participatory research, researchers work *with* rather than *in* communities, collaborating with health professionals, community groups, and others who will be using the intervention under study.

Several HHS agencies, including the NIH, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are funding community-based participatory research. For example, CDC funds community-based participatory research projects across the country through its Community-Based Participatory Prevention Research Grants program.

For more information on CDC's community-based participatory research projects please visit the [CDC Grants Website](#).

2007 Food Assistance and Nutrition RIDGE Conference

The Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE) Program encourages new and innovative research on food assistance and nutrition issues and broadens the participation of social science scholars in this important research area. The annual conference is a forum for grant recipients and attendees to discuss results of recently funded grants on food assistance programs, food security, and nutrition. This year's RIDGE Conference will be held Oct. 11-12 at the Economic Research Service offices in Washington.

A preliminary agenda is available. Attendance is free but registration is required due to limited space. For more information, please visit the [ERS Conference Website](#).

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Call for abstracts by International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health

The International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health (ICPAPH) is calling for abstracts on a wide variety of health related topics for the 2008 symposium, scheduled for April 13 -16 in Amsterdam. Themes for the conference include: E-health; cost-effectiveness of interventions; evidence-based policy/practice; gene-environment interaction; measurement of physical activity; community-based interventions; injuries in the active population; and sedentary behavior. Abstracts will be peer reviewed.

For details on how to submit your abstract, please visit the [ICPAPH Website](#).

Trust for America's Health reports continued rise in obesity rates

According to a report by Trust for America's Health (TFAH), over the past year adult obesity rates rose in 31 states and decreased in none. The fourth annual edition of [F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies are Failing in America](#) estimates two-thirds of Americans are either overweight or obese; and using a public opinion survey, it claims 85 percent of Americans believe obesity is an epidemic, and 81 percent think the government should play a role in addressing the epidemic. The report also includes rankings of state obesity rates, a review of federal and state government policies aimed at reducing or preventing obesity, and recommendations for families, communities, schools, employers, the food and beverage industries, health professionals, and government. For more information, please visit [the TFAH website](#).

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