

Fifty Shades of Sequestration: It is More than Defense Cuts!

Meet with Your Members Now and Protect Human Services Funding

Congress members will be heading home for their August recess next week. However, with approval ratings at an all-time low and many critical issues still unresolved, they might need some summer school from their constituents.

The automatic cuts to defense and nondefense spending known as sequestration, as well as the expiration of the 2001/2003 tax cuts (Bush tax cuts) and numerous other budgetary issues known in total as the 'fiscal cliff', need to be addressed by the end of the year. **While the defense sequestration and the tax cuts have received the most publicity by far, human needs are set to face devastating cuts across the board as well.**

Use this recess to meet with your Congress members and educate them on the impact these initiatives might have in your community.

Background

Since it is an election year, little, if any, substantive legislation will pass between now and November 6, leaving many critical decisions to be made during the lame duck session between Election Day and the end of the year. The two main issues are:

- **The sequester:** Earlier this year, the Budget Control Act included automatic cuts of \$1.2 trillion over ten years if sufficient deficit reduction could not be achieved by the so-called Super Committee. Because Congress reached no agreement, these cuts go into effect in 2013. HCH funding is capped at a 2% cut, but HUD, SAMHSA, Ryan White, and most other domestic programs are facing about an 8.4% cut if nothing is done. View this [report](#) from the Senate Labor HHS Appropriations Subcommittee for details on the impact of the sequester, including state-by-state data.
- **Expiring Bush tax cuts:** The tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003 are set to expire at the end of the year. These tax cuts represent about \$3 trillion over the next ten years; allowing some to expire (perhaps for the wealthy) could provide critical revenue that would mitigate the need for cuts to human services.

The magnitude of federal spending and revenue at stake will put intense pressure on members of Congress to protect different interest groups. Make sure housing, health services, and other parts of the safety net are protected as well.

TAKE ACTION

The Congressional recess is an excellent opportunity to start or continue a dialogue with your members about the impact these decisions will have on your project and patients. Consider one of the following courses of action:

- **Schedule a site visit.** Use the Capitol Switchboard at **1(877) 210-5351**, or find your members on www.house.gov or www.senate.gov to contact your House and Senate members' offices. **Call soon since their schedules fill up** very quickly. Ask to speak to the scheduler and invite the Congressperson to tour of your project, maybe in concert with a new program, building, event, or anniversary your project is celebrating. Sell your project and its importance to your community.
- **Schedule a meeting.** If a site visit is not possible, an in-person meeting is still a great option. Ask to meet about the end-of-year funding decisions and their impact on the HCH community. Set it up through the scheduler and consider bringing other community partners, HCH staff, consumers or Board members from

your project.

- **Attend a town hall or other public meeting.** Your members of Congress are likely to have many public events scheduled. Check their personal websites and find a meeting to attend.

The main message is to protect human services from further cuts in the end of the year funding decisions. Use the following talking points to strengthen your argument:

- Use personal stories and data from your project about how further cuts would affect your patients and community.
- Highlight the state-level data provided in the sequester [report](#).
- Identify funding streams important to your project and patients (Health Center funding, SAMHSA, Ryan White, HUD).
- Describe any pending grant applications you have that would be impacted by further cuts (such as New Access Point or Expanded Services Grants).
- Discuss the unique value your project provides to the community.
- Point out the impact on jobs that cuts to human services may have.

Non-defense spending has borne the brunt of funding cuts thus far and could face even bigger cuts in the near future. **The only way to reverse this trend is to speak up and demonstrate the support for and the importance of these programs.** Rest assured the defense industry and advocates for bigger tax cuts and smaller government will be weighing in on their version of how the 'fiscal cliff' should be averted - **make sure the HCH community speaks out as well!**

Support The National HCH Council's advocacy work!
Donate [here](#)

Dan Rabbitt, Health Policy Organizer
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
drabbitt@nhchc.org | 443-703-1337 | www.nhchc.org

HEALTH CARE AND HOUSING ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

