

August 6, 2013 | Vol. XVIII No. 10

## All Politics Are Local So are the impacts of budget cuts

*Meet with members of Congress in their districts in August*

Members of Congress are back in their home districts for five weeks, which provides a valuable opportunity for constituents to relay their concerns. **Extreme budget cuts to housing, nutrition assistance, health care services, and more remain possible this fall**, but the recent failure of the House Transportation-HUD Bill shows most members of Congress are sensitive to the impact of deep budget cuts when they are taken from the abstract and defined in real terms. Take this opportunity to meet with your elected officials and **make sure they understand what deep cuts to the safety net will mean for your work and the people you serve.**

### TAKE ACTION

The most pressing issue that members of Congress need to address is the budget cuts caused by the sequester (more information about [the sequester](#) and the [current budget situation](#)). **These cuts have already caused numerous disruptions in services and will directly affect millions of additional people if they are implemented for the next fiscal year and beyond.** The only way to build the political will needed to restore these cuts is through grassroots pressure.

The August Congressional Recess lasts through September 12, but members' schedules fill up quickly. **Act now** and contact your members of Congress through the **Capitol Switchboard, toll free at 1 (877) 210-5351**. Once connected, ask to speak with whoever is handling the member's schedule during the August recess or for his/her contact information. Contact the scheduler to request a meeting to discuss the impact budget cuts will have on your community. Here are a few ideas:

- **Invite the official to tour your project.** This is the best way to show how federal dollars are being used to serve the community and a great photo op for the official as well.
- **Schedule a meeting at his/her office** if a tour cannot be organized. If the member is unavailable, meet with the staff person; staff members are also helpful.
- **Include a diverse group of stakeholders in the meeting.** Consider bringing consumers, clinicians, front-line staff, and other partners you work with.
- **Know your issues.** Think about how budget cuts have or will affect your services. Use specific, local examples. Go to the Council's [Appropriations/Budget Page](#) for charts, briefs, media stories, and other tools.
- **Know your official.** Check out this great [database](#) from our partners at RESULTS for policy backgrounds on all members of Congress.
- **Attend a town hall meeting.** Check your officials' personal websites or use this [partial database](#).
- **Report your efforts to the Council.** Email [Dan Rabbitt](#) and let us know how things go!

Remember, elected officials work for you and value your concerns. Make the most of the opportunity while they are back in your community!

### Background

**Budget Control Act, the Sequester, and funding for next year:** The Budget Control Act (BCA) passed in August 2011 established separate limits on defense and nondefense spending, as well as the automatic budget cuts known as the sequester. Both the House and Senate have adopted FY14 Budget Resolutions that violate the limits set by the BCA. Additional legislation amending the BCA will be required if either the House or Senate bills are to be signed into law.

- **House Action:** The House Budget violates the BCA by transferring funds from

nondefense programs and using the funds to increase defense and veterans' programs. This results in significant cuts to nondefense programs beyond the cuts caused by the sequester. For example, the Transportation-HUD Bill in the House is \$10 billion or 18% lower than the Senate bill. The Labor-HHS-Education Bill in the House is \$43 billion or 26% lower than the Senate Bill. The levels of funding allocated in the House would be catastrophic for human services. The House also assumes the overall level of spending will be consistent with the sequester, which is \$91 billion less overall than the Senate Budget. The House T-HUD Bill was pulled from the schedule last week because it did not have enough votes to pass, showing many members in the House do not support drastic budget cuts once the reductions are allocated to specific programs.

- **Senate Action:** The Senate Budget also violates the BCA by assuming the sequester will be repealed or replaced. It results in a significantly higher amount of funding for all programs but will require an additional act of Congress to make law. The Senate has passed many bills out of committee but did not have the votes to consider them in the full Senate.
- **Prospects going forward:** The two chambers of Congress are so far apart in their funding levels that it is unlikely that a compromise will be reached. The most likely scenario is a continuing resolution that would fund the government in FY14 at the previous year's levels. This would also maintain the sequester. A less likely scenario is a bipartisan agreement to replace some or all of the sequester. This will be difficult because the Senate and Administration would want some portion of the sequester replaced with increases in revenues and the House and Senate Republicans have been adamantly against any increase in revenue, instead demanding only spending cuts. Some action will be needed by October 1, 2013, to avoid a government shutdown.

**Other legislative issues:** Beyond funding the government, several other issues are unresolved and will require action after the August recess. These are also appropriate to discuss during meetings if they are pertinent to your work or situation.

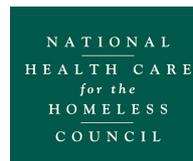
- **SNAP (food stamp) reauthorization:** The Senate passed a bill that cuts \$4 billion from SNAP, but the House has been unable to pass a similar bill due to conservative demands for further cuts. It has been reported that the House will take up a bill in September that cuts \$40 billion and imposes work requirements on recipients.
- **Immigration Reform:** The Senate passed a bill providing legalization and a path to citizenship for currently undocumented immigrants. It largely maintained the status quo in terms of access to health care and other benefits. The path forward in the House is unclear, although new efforts to bar undocumented or legal immigrants from benefits and access may occur.
- **Family Health Care Accessibility Act:** This bill would provide FTCA medical malpractice insurance for volunteer providers at health centers and is strongly supported by the Council. Cosponsors in both chambers of congress are needed. Consider speaking to your elected officials about this issue.

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