

National Coalition of Parent Centers

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FISCAL ISSUES UPDATE

From The Arc's Capitol Insider - Week of February 4th:

On Jan 23 and 31, respectively, the House and Senate passed the "No Budget, No Pay Act of 2013" to temporarily increase the nation's debt limit until May 19. This action postpones the threat of federal government defaulting on its obligations. President Obama is expected to sign the bill. The legislation temporarily suspends the \$16.4 trillion limit on federal borrowing, which will allow the government to meet obligations like Social Security benefits and government salaries. It also holds the salaries of Members of Congress in escrow if the House and Senate fail to pass a budget resolution by April 15.

The measure changes the order of major fiscal showdowns Congress faces. The debt ceiling increase now moves to the end of the series of critical budget events:

- March 01 - Across-the-board spending cuts ("sequestration") to take effect
- March 27 - FY 2013 short term appropriation ("continuing resolution") ends
- March 30 - President Obama expected to submit FY 2014 Budget Request
- April 15 - Deadline for House and Senate to pass FY 2014 Budget Resolution
- May 19 - Debt ceiling increase expires

Republican leadership in the House of Representatives initiated this effort to try to force the Senate to describe its proposal to address the federal deficit. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), the new chair of the Senate Budget Committee, had earlier announced her intention to have the Committee produce a budget resolution. Having a budget resolution passed by the Senate would mark a new starting point for negotiations on a long term deal.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The Capitol Insider also reports:

Many programs vital to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) have been at risk of deep cuts during the recent deficit reduction negotiations. Social Security is still in danger of being cut as Members of Congress consider a proposal to change the way benefits are calculated. This shift to what is called the "chained CPI" is a cut to Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. Cuts from the "chained CPI" get bigger every year and could have horrible consequences for people with I/DD over time.

Last week, The Arc's CEO Peter Berns was invited to speak at a press conference in the U.S. Capitol, organized by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT). Berns was joined by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Sen. Jeff

Merkley (D-OR), and representatives from other organizations whose constituencies would be impacted by this benefit cut. To read more visit our blog.

MEDICAID

From UCP's Washington Wire - February 7th:

Last week, President Obama's top economic adviser, Gene Sperling announced that the White House will accept a fight on Medicare in order to protect the Medicaid program from cuts. Sperling also said that Medicaid cuts will not be on the table as fiscal negotiations continue. Read on from The Hill.

MENTAL HEALTH

From the Washington Post - February 8th - By Brady Dennis and Paul Kane

A bipartisan group of senators, citing renewed urgency after the shooting massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School, introduced legislation Thursday aimed at strengthening the nation's fragmented mental health-care system and improving access at the community level.

The bill would put in place standards for about 2,000 "federally qualified" community behavioral health centers, requiring them to provide such services as substance abuse treatment and 24-hour critical care.

In return, facilities meeting criteria would be able to bill Medicaid for their services - a change intended to open the door to treatment for many more people and one that is estimated to cost about \$1 billion over the next decade.

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