



## APHA Legislative Update February 2008

- I. *President Releases 2009 Budget Proposal*
- II. *House Fails at Second SCHIP Veto Override Attempt*
- III. *APHA releases 2007 Congressional Vote Tally*
- IV. *House Passes Mental Health Bill for Inmates*
- V. *New Bill Would Reverse the EPA Decision on State Emissions Standards*
- VI. *PEPFAR-Related Legislation Introduced*
- VII. ***POLICY WATCH!** News on relevant Federal, State and local activities*

---

### *I. President Releases 2009 Budget Proposal*

On February 4, 2008, President Bush released his \$3.1 trillion fiscal year 2009 federal budget proposal. The proposal calls for significant cuts to critical public health programs, including a \$475 million cut to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a \$992 million decrease for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as well as cuts to the Medicare and Medicaid programs. The proposal received an immediate negative reaction from Democrats and budget leaders on Capitol Hill. Many of the cuts proposed by the president have been rejected by both Republicans and Democrats in Congress in the past. Now that Congress has received the President's proposal, the House and Senate Budget Committees will begin work on drafting their own budget resolutions which will guide the Congressional budget process for the year. APHA, which chairs both the CDC Coalition and the Friends of HRSA, has already begun its activities to fight the proposed cuts in the President's budget and to increase funding for both agencies to ensure a strong public health infrastructure and workforce. To read more about APHA's reaction to the president's budget, you can view our press release at: <http://www.apha.org/about/news/pressreleases/2008/FY09BudgetResponse.htm>.

### *II. House Fails at Second SCHIP Veto Override Attempt*

On Wednesday, January 23, 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives failed for the second time to override President Bush's veto of legislation to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The bill would have reauthorized SCHIP at nearly \$60 billion over five years, expanding the program by \$35 billion. To offset the cost of the expansion, it would increase the tax on cigarettes by 61 cents, to \$1 per pack, and raise taxes on other tobacco products. The override attempt failed by a vote of 260-152, 15 votes short of the two-thirds majority required.

Passage of the SCHIP reauthorization remains a priority for APHA. We will continue our efforts this year to expand the program to cover 10 million children.

### ***III. APHA releases 2007 Congressional Vote Tally***

On February 1, 2008, APHA released its annual congressional record, which measures how members of Congress voted on legislation that is important to public health. APHA's report was compiled by examining hundreds of individual votes and selecting key public health votes during the first session of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2007. To see how your Representative and Senators voted in relation to APHA's position on key public health votes, please visit APHA's advocacy site at: <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/activities/2006aphavotingrecord.htm>.

### ***IV. House Passes Inmates' Mental Health Bill***

On January 23, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 3992 to reauthorize the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA) and increase funding from \$50 million to \$75 million annually through fiscal year 2014. MIOTCRA includes the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Grant Program, which helps states and localities coordinate efforts between the criminal justice and mental health systems. The bill would also reauthorize the Mental Health Courts Grant Program that improves judicial supervision and coordination of post-release services. In addition to expanding existing grants, the bill would authorize an additional \$35 million annually through fiscal year 2014 to support grants for the training of law enforcement officers, treatment of female prisoners who are mentally ill, coordination of treatment for mentally ill prisoners, and identification and assessment of mentally ill inmates. The Senate has not acted on the companion bill, S. 2304.

### ***V. New Bill Would Reverse the EPA Decision on State Emissions Standards***

Lawmakers in the U.S. Senate introduced legislation that would direct the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to grant California a waiver under the Clean Air Act to implement more stringent greenhouse gas emissions standards for motor vehicles. It would also permit other states to adopt California's emissions standards. Currently, 18 other states have adopted California's standards or are moving towards adopting them. The bill would overturn the EPA's decision in December to deny the request by California and 16 other states for the authority to regulate emissions.

### ***VI. PEPFAR-Related Legislation Introduced***

U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) introduced the PEPFAR Accountability and Transparency Act (S. 2584) to increase global HIV/AIDS operations research. The bill would require the Global AIDS Coordinator to develop a strategic plan to improve monitoring and evaluation of the programs funded under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in order to improve accountability, transparency and the development of evidence-based best practices. PEPFAR expires at the end of this fiscal year and reauthorization legislation has been drafted. The House Foreign Affairs Committee plans to mark-up the draft legislation on February 7.

### ***VIII. POLICY WATCH: News on relevant federal, state and local activities***

***California Comprehensive Healthcare Bill Defeated in Senate.*** Since the January 2008 Legislative Update, members of a California Senate Health Committee voted against Governor Schwarzenegger's \$14 billion plan to insure nearly all residents. Lawmakers criticized the financial viability of the plan after the state's

nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office released a study that found the program could face an annual deficit of as much as \$1.5 billion by the end of its fifth year. California already faces a \$14.5 billion budget deficit.

***Ohio Bill Widens Health Insurance Coverage.*** The Ohio House of Representatives introduced legislation that would make health insurance more accessible and improve the health of Ohioans. The bill would provide families with incomes below the federal poverty level and who do not qualify for Medicaid incentives such as tax credits to purchase coverage. It also would make Bureau Workers' Compensation premium discounts available to small businesses that do not offer health insurance, change the eligibility age of dependent coverage in family policies from 22 to 29, and define charitable care for nonprofit hospitals. The bill also would increase salaries for nursing school teachers, improve nutrition and pricing standards for primary-secondary schools and kindergarten, allow group insurance plans to offer a "wellness discount" program, and expand state prescription drug benefits. The estimated cost of the program is \$100 million to \$150 million each year.

***Washington State Introduces Bill to Bring Local Produce to Schools.*** Lawmakers in Washington State have introduced legislation that would bring more fresh produce to students and other state residents. The bill would provide \$2 million in grants to increase the availability of locally grown fruit and vegetables in schools with large low-income student populations. These grants would establish a pilot program to connect food banks with local farmers, help underserved families and seniors purchase nutritious foods at farmers markets, and support research designed to help farms collaboratively market and distribute products. The bill would fund two new employees at the state Department of Agriculture to connect schools, farms and wholesalers and promote seasonally available products. It also would allow schools and state agencies to buy Washington meat, dairy products and produce without going through the traditional formal bidding process.

***Lawmakers in Virginia and Alabama Address Childhood Obesity.*** Lawmakers in Virginia and Alabama are advancing legislation that aims to reduce childhood obesity. The Virginia Senate voted in favor of a bill to phase out the use of trans fats in food sold in public schools. Alabama's House Majority Leader, Ken Guin, who was recently diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, declared his plan to introduce legislation that would require schools to increase physical education from 30 minutes a day to 50 minutes a day for elementary students and 45 minutes a day for middle and high school students, offer more healthy food in school lunches, and inform parents about their child's body mass index.

**Take action on APHA's updated legislative alerts to improve health care for American Indians and other underserved minority groups, support global health, authorize the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to regulate tobacco products, and strengthen the public health work force. Help APHA influence lawmakers to make these bills a priority in 2008. You can view these and other APHA action alerts by visiting APHA's advocacy site at: <http://www.capwiz.com/apha/home/>. Check back often for new and updated action alerts.**

*Please email us any relevant stories from your community or state to be included in future editions of policy watch.*

Contact \* [APHA Home](#)

APHA 800 I Street NW, Washington DC 20001

202-777-APHA (tel) \* 202-777-2534 (fax)