

**OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND POLITICAL ACTION****2005 END-OF-YEAR REPORT****109TH CONGRESS**

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ACTION NETWORK FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (ANSWER) LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The 2005 legislative priorities for ANSWER were the National Center for Social Work Research Act, Title IV-E child welfare training program, loan forgiveness, appropriations report language, and the reauthorization of the Health Professions Education Partnerships Act and the National Institutes of Health.

National Center for Social Work Research Act: Sen. Inouye introduced the National Center for Social Work Research Act (S.90) in January. The Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act (S.1580/H.R.3561) also includes language for a National Center for Social Work Research.

Appropriations Report Language: NASW was successful in securing report language requested by ANSWER in the House and Senate FY 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bills (H.R.3010).

NIH: Report language accompanying funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) applauds the work of the NIH Child Abuse and Neglect Working Group and calls on the group to continue its collaboration across institutes and agencies to identify and address needed research and professional development in the area of child maltreatment, specifically in treatment interventions. NASW/ANSWER was instrumental in promoting the creation of the Working Group. Identical language was included in both the House (H.R. Rept. 109-143) and Senate reports (S. Rept. 109-103).

NCI: Language accompanying funding for the National Cancer Institute (NCI) “encourages NCI to coordinate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct further research on the outcome of social work interventions to meet patient and family psychosocial needs in hospitals and cancer treatment centers.” Language was included in the Senate report.

Child Welfare Training: Language accompanying funding for the Title IV-B child welfare training program recognizes “the failings in the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) and the States’ continuing challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified child welfare personnel, particularly those who hold a degree in social work,” and “encourages the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to continue to provide grants to schools of social work and traineeships to social work students being trained in the specialty of child welfare.” The language also encourages ACF “to provide funding for research into how specially trained social work personnel affect outcomes for children and families.” Language was included in the Senate report.

Additional language accompanying funding for Title IV-B training “recognizes the need for trained, skilled and qualified child welfare service workers” and explains that the program “provides grants to institutions of higher education to develop and improve education and training programs and resources for child welfare service providers as well as students seeking degrees in social work.” Language was included in the House report.

CHILD WELFARE

Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Program

The year 2005 ended without undue harm being done to the Title IV-E child welfare training program—an outcome that was far from certain when the year began. In February, for the third consecutive year, President Bush released a budget that included a proposal to block grant the Title IV-E foster care program, including IV-E training. As in previous years, legislation to implement the President’s proposal was never introduced. Rep. Wally Herger (R-CA), chair of the Human Resources Subcommittee of the

House Ways and Means Committee, held a June hearing on child welfare financing, but did not reintroduce his version of a child welfare block grant, the Child SAFE Act of 2004. Both the Bush and Herger proposals would have jeopardized the Title IV-E training program and its agency-university partnerships by eliminating the program's entitlement funding and the enhanced 75 percent federal matching rate.

After criticizing the Bush Administration for its failure to develop legislative language to implement its proposed "Child Welfare Program Option," Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA), the ranking member on the Human Resources Subcommittee, introduced his own bill in July. The Leave No Abused or Neglected Child Behind Act (H.R.3576) is quite a departure from the President's vision. While H.R.3576 would cap "true" administrative costs at 15 percent, it would not cap funding for the IV-E training program. In fact, the bill would raise the federal share for short-term training costs from 50 percent to 75 percent to match the rate for long-term education and training. The bill also would create a new grant program to help states improve their child welfare workforces. Other provisions in the bill would open IV-E eligibility to all children and allow reimbursement for guardianship and services. No action on the McDermott bill was expected during this congressional session and none has taken place.

Although the threat of block grant legislation lingered throughout the year, another threat to the program emerged in the form of proposed budget cuts. As part of its budget plan, the Bush Administration proposed changes to IV-E administrative cost claims that were estimated to save \$856 million over five years and changes to Targeted Case Management under Medicaid that would save over \$3 billion. Congress increased the likelihood of other cuts in child welfare, including child welfare training, when it passed a budget that included cuts in entitlement programs that totaled \$35 billion, and then decided later that \$35 billion was too low.

The budget reconciliation bill passed by the House includes a number of the administrative changes and both the House and Senate-passed bills include changes to Targeted Case Management, which will affect the delivery of child welfare services. However, neither bill contains any direct threats to the child welfare training program.

NASW ACTION

Throughout the year NASW educated members of Congress about the value of the Title IV-E training program and the dangers a block grant posed not only to the program, but also to abused and neglected children. The Association also is fighting the proposed budget cuts in child welfare and other human services programs.

NASW continued its work with the ANSWER Coalition, the Title IV-E training directors, and other social work educators on building congressional support for protecting and enhancing the child welfare training program and agency-university partnerships.

In addition, NASW is continuing to work with other national child welfare advocates to develop alternatives to a Title IV-E block grant and a coordinated strategy for retaining the IV-E training entitlement and its enhanced federal match.

Advocacy materials for the Title IV-E training program are posted on the ANSWER Web site and on NASW's child welfare advocacy page: https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/child_welfare.asp

Child Welfare Appropriations: CAPTA & Title IV-B Child Welfare Training

Both the House- and Senate-passed FY 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill (H.R.3010) maintained level funding for the majority of child welfare programs. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Grants were funded at the current

\$27.3 million level, CAPTA Discretionary and Research Grants at \$31.6 million, and CAPTA Community-Based Grants at \$42.9 million. Funding for Title IV-B, Section 426 child welfare training also was approved at the current level of \$7.4 million. Those levels were incorporated into the appropriations conference report. After rejecting the original conference report, the House passed a slightly revised version of the report on December 14, 2005, which the Senate approved on December 21, 2005. President Bush signed the bill on December 30, 2005, as Pub. L. No. 109-149.

For information on child welfare-related report language in the House and Senate appropriations bills, please see the information under the ANSWER section above.

NASW ACTION

NASW, as part of the National Child Abuse Coalition, advocated for Congress to increase CAPTA funding for Title I and Title II to the levels proposed by the President last year and to increase funding for research to the authorized level of \$35 million. The Association signed a letter to congressional appropriators making the case for increased funding, and met with key members of the appropriations committees. NASW continues to monitor the appropriations process and the potential for across-the-board cuts or other reductions in funding for CAPTA and other child welfare programs.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)

ENDA is a critical piece of civil rights legislation because it will redress historical labor market discrimination against gays and lesbians solely because of their sexual orientation. ENDA was not reintroduced in the House during the 108th Congress, but was reintroduced in the Senate on January 7, 2003, in the 108th Congress. At that time, ENDA had 27 Senate co-sponsors. NASW anticipates that ENDA will be reintroduced in the Senate in the coming months.

NASW ACTION

NASW continues to diligently pursue introduction and enactment of ENDA through progressive coalition efforts with the Human Rights Campaign, the National Urban League, People For the American Way, the AFL-CIO, and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. These partnerships advocate for reintroduction in the Senate and House of Representatives. The Association continues to target previous Senate and House co-sponsors and supporters, including the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Women's Caucus, and the Moderate Republicans. Past alerts and updates can be found on NASW's Web site:

http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/civil_rights.asp

Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act

Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) and Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2005 (H.R.2662/ S.1145) on May 26, 2005. Along with its coalition partners, NASW was able to secure a major victory on H.R.2662. On September 14, 2005, the House of Representatives approved an amendment (544) adding Hate Crime legislation to H.R.3132, the Children's Safety Act. The vote on the amendment was 223 to 199, with 192 Democrats, 30 Republicans, and one Independent supporting the amendment. Subsequently, H.R. 3132 was approved 371 to 52. House passage indicates that Hate Crime legislation has strong bipartisan support in addition to exemplary outreach and education efforts by coalition members. Meanwhile, in the Senate, there are 44 cosponsors that are committed to alleviating bias-induced violence.

In short, the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act would allow the federal government to work with state and local authorities to punish hate crimes to the fullest extent possible, and to expand the definition of hate crimes to include those motivated by disability, gender, or sexual orientation. Although NASW

believes that states should continue to play a primary role in the prosecution of hate crime violence, federal law is essential to complement state statutes and to help states prosecute these complicated and expensive cases.

NASW ACTION

NASW will continue to work with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, People For the American Way, the Human Rights Campaign, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to secure passage of the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act. The Association will continue to make congressional visits to Senate Judiciary Committee members, with particular focus on moderate Republicans.

Violence Against Women Act

Congress cleared legislation to reauthorize the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). On December 16, 2005, the Senate approved the conference report by unanimous consent. The House approved the measure by voice vote on December 17, 2005, and forwarded the legislation to President Bush for his signature. President Bush signed VAWA (Pub. L. No.109-162) on January 5, 2006. NASW believes that VAWA is critical to saving the lives of many vulnerable women and is vital to creating new programs that integrate community responses and resources designed to end violence against women.

NASW ACTION

In collaboration with the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, National Women's Law Center, National Association of Community Health Centers, and the American Psychological Association, NASW steadfastly advocated for successful passage of this landmark legislation. Through these forged alliances, the Association lobbied both Chambers of Congress with the conviction that VAWA protects victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking while providing targeted funding for direct service for all victims including underserved communities and their unique needs. The life-saving programs of VAWA ensure that domestic violence victims receive competent and adequate legal representation while enforcing protection orders, which historically have helped to increase domestic violence prosecutions. The Association further contended that allowing VAWA to expire would have had devastating consequences on women and children, and ultimately on society.

ECONOMIC EQUITY

The Fair Minimum Wage Act

The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005 would increase the minimum wage to \$7.25 in three steps starting at \$5.85 on 60 days after enactment to \$6.55 one year later, and ultimately, to \$7.25 one year after that period. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) introduced the legislation (S.1062) in the Senate on May 18, 2005, and Rep. George Miller (D-CA) sponsored the companion legislation in the House (H.R.2429). Currently, 34 co-sponsors in the Senate and 120 in the House support a wage enhancement for American workers. The Association believes that the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005 will appreciably affect the quality of life for women, children, minorities, and families across the nation by providing meaningful wages that offset poverty levels.

NASW ACTION

NASW is working with the Campaign For a Fair Minimum Wage, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, AFL-CIO, the American Psychological Association, and the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops to secure introduction and passage of this initiative. The Association continues to work with Sen. Kennedy's (D-MA) legislative staff on a political and coalition strategy, in addition to lobbying Senate and House members who have significant influence over this measure. Past alerts and

updates can be found on NASW's Web site:
http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/civil_rights.asp

The Fair Pay Act

Introduced in both the House and Senate on April 19, 2005 by Rep. Eleanor Holmes-Norton (D-DC) and Sen. Thomas Harkin (D-IA), the Fair Pay Act (H.R.1697/ S.840) attempts to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 by eliminating sex and race discrimination in the wage-setting system. Most women and minorities are disproportionately segregated into a small number of jobs, such as clerical, service workers, nurses, social service providers, and teachers. Historically, these positions have been devalued and underpaid because of their occupants' gender or race. NASW believes that the Fair Pay Act would expand the protections of the Equal Pay Act by safeguarding women and minorities against wage discrimination in jobs with similar skills and responsibilities equivalent to predominantly white male jobs. Currently, 100 cosponsors in the House and 31 in the Senate believe in eliminating the wage disparity endured by women and minorities.

NASW ACTION

NASW's legislative strategy consists of working with the foremost coalition on gender equity concerns, the National Committee on Pay Equity. NASW's advocacy efforts continue to focus on moderate Republicans and Democrats who serve on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, as well as on Republican senators on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Past alerts and updates can be found on NASW's Web site: http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/civil_rights

EDUCATION

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Proposed regulations to provide guidance to schools about how to implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), approved by Congress in late 2004, appeared in the *Federal Register* on June 21, 2005. In addition to soliciting written comments on the draft regulations, the U.S. Department of Education conducted a series of meetings across the country in June and July where individuals were invited to submit written and verbal comments.

NASW ACTION

NASW signed on to joint comments on the proposed IDEA regulations that were developed by the National Alliance of Pupil Services Organizations (NAPSO). NAPSO's comments were presented at the Department of Education's public hearing in Washington, D.C. in July 2005 and submitted in writing in September. The comments addressed the issues of personnel qualifications, mandatory medication, early intervention services, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and discipline.

Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program

The FY 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee in July 2005 contains an increase of \$1.3 million for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (ESSCP). The \$36 million total for the 2006-2007 school year is the highest funding level yet for the program. The appropriations bill approved by the House in June level funded the program at \$34.7 million.

A summary of the ESSCP is posted on the education issues page on NASW's Web site:
<https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/education.asp>

NASW ACTION

NASW strongly supports the higher Senate figure for the ESSCP and continues to partner with the School Social Work Association of America, American Counseling Association, American School Counselor

Association, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association for College Admission Counseling, American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in advocating for the program.

In addition, NASW signed a letter to the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee requesting emergency funding for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program to assist students affected by Hurricane Katrina.

FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE

Head Start

On September 22, the House passed the Head Start reauthorization legislation, H.R.2123, the School Readiness Act of 2005. The otherwise bipartisan bill contained a divisive amendment that repeals important civil rights hiring protections. Congressman John Boehner (OH-R-8) introduced the amendment on the House floor and it passed 220 to 196. The Boehner Amendment exempts religious organizations from the nondiscrimination provision in federal law (42 U.S.C. 9849). Current law prohibits discrimination in Head Start operations based on race, creed, religion, color, national origin, sex, political affiliation, or beliefs. The Senate version of the bill does not include a similar amendment.

NASW ACTION

NASW continued to work closely with the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination (CARD) to defeat the Boehner Amendment. NASW signed a letter with CARD calling for defeat of the Boehner Amendment and final passage of the House bill. Staff also participated in legislative visits on Head Start to key members of Congress. NASW members wrote letters to their members of Congress against the Boehner Amendment. NASW will continue to work with CARD to stop any attempt to include similar language that would roll back current civil rights protections in Head Start in the Senate bill.

Although we lost the vote, the coalition, along with the National Head Start Association, persuaded many Members of Congress that employment discrimination in Head Start is harmful public policy. The close vote in the House will help with advocacy efforts in the Senate.

Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)

Faith-based legislation, similar to what has been introduced in previous years, was introduced again in both the House and Senate during the last week of September 2005. Of particular note, the CARE Act (S. 1780), introduced by Sens. Rick Santorum (R-PA) and Joe Lieberman (D-CT), like in the last Congress, includes \$1.3 billion in new funding for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) over a two-year period. The House bill, the Charitable Giving Act (H.R.3908), introduced by Rep. Roy Blunt (R-MO), does not include additional funding, but maintains the amount of funds permitted to be transferred from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to the SSBG at 10 percent.

HEALTH

Advance Directives

The Association has been working with the offices of Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Rep. Sander Levin (D-MI) on the Advance Directives Improvement and Education Act of 2005 (S.347/H.R.2058), in which Medicare recipients can consult with their physician on end-of-life and advanced care planning issues to become informed about potential decisions a person or a person's family members may face in life-threatening situations. This legislation would allow physicians to be reimbursed for a medical visit to discuss end-of-life care issues with patients and family members.

NASW supports this bipartisan bill as an important tool for all Americans to use in considering, communicating, and documenting their advance care planning wishes in regard to end-of-life situations and quality of life indicators for devastating illness or injury, from which there is little or no hope of recovery. The bill has been passed by the Senate and referred to the House Subcommittee on Health where it awaits to be heard.

NASW ACTION

NASW has been working closely with the offices of Sen. Nelson and Rep. Levin to increase support, especially in the House. There are currently 33 cosponsors on the House bill, and more are needed.

Patient Navigator Act

The Patient Navigator Act 2005 (H.R.1812/ S. 898), sponsored by Rep. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), passed the House and the Senate in the spring of 2005. President Bush signed the legislation in June as Pub. L. No. 109-018. This law would establish a "patient navigator" system through the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), National Cancer Institute, and the Indian Health Service. Under the system, patient navigators would help uninsured patients evaluate their treatment options, as well as help them to obtain referrals, find clinical trials, and apply for financial assistance. The legislation authorizes \$25 million in grants over five years to establish patient navigator programs in low-income and rural communities nationwide.

NASW ACTION

NASW was able to secure language in both the House and Senate committee reports that strongly recommends navigators be supervised and have oversight by licensed professionals. Although the bill was passed, funding levels and implementation plans have yet to be released. NASW staff developed guidelines, along with other stakeholders, to assist HRSA in the regulatory process. We provided input on education requirements, prior work experience, appropriate background checks, and specified levels of expertise in community health care.

Association Health Plans (AHPs)

The Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2005 (H.R.525/S.406) would allow small businesses to buy health insurance through business and trade associations and allow AHPs to operate without state oversight and is steadily moving through Congress. It passed the House at the end of July. Hearings have been held for the Senate bill where it was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, but no further action has occurred.

NASW ACTION

NASW opposes the creation of national Association Health Plans (AHPs) because they repeal state insurance mandates and vendorship laws and they lack basic state insurance commissioner oversight. The Association has joined over 1,050 national and local organizations that have united against the legislation. Organizations' concerns are expressed in the many letters they are sending to Congress. A battle is occurring in the Senate, where the bill remains a priority for GOP leaders.

Health Information Technology (IT)

Health IT legislation made significant gains in the Senate during 2005 and passed the floor in mid-November. The Senate Finance and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committees introduced separate Health IT bills in June that sought a bipartisan vision of a higher quality, safer, and more efficient healthcare system through health information technology.

The final Senate bill (S.1418) was sponsored by Senators Enzi and Kennedy and promotes information technology as a tool for bringing about fundamental change in the healthcare system. The legislation establishes an Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology within the

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). It also requires the HHS secretary to establish the public-private American Health Information Collaborative to make recommendations on setting national policies for supporting the widespread adoption of health information technology. A major floor amendment sponsored by Senator Debbie Stabenow and strongly supported by NASW would protect state laws concerning medical records privacy.

Also under the bill, a government-sponsored board would make recommendations for setting national standards for medical data technologies. It also would award competitive grants to health care providers that distribute and store health information electronically. The bill now specifies that it would not affect privacy-related provisions in the Social Security Act or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Rep. Johnson (R-CT) introduced similar legislation (H.R.4157) in December 2005, but this bill does not protect state laws concerning medical records privacy.

NASW ACTION

NASW is working with other behavioral health professional groups to ensure the privacy of medical data, and is trying to ensure that the House measure will clarify that current health privacy rules apply to any health information stored or transmitted electronically. The House is expected to take up action early in 2006, and the legislation will be a major priority for NASW.

Health Professions Education Act

Title VII and Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act authorize a variety of grants for students, programs, and institutions to improve the racial and ethnic diversity, geographic distribution, and quality of the health care work force. These programs are designed to meet the nation's needs by increasing the supply of primary medical and dental care providers and public health and allied health professionals, training more health professionals in fields experiencing shortages, improving the geographic distribution of health professionals, expanding access to health care in underserved areas, and enhancing minority representation in the pool of practicing health professionals.

One of the goals for NASW is to be designated as an allied health professional under this Act. This designation would have implications for training funding, particularly for graduate social work education programs, and workforce data compilation. As this nation's health care delivery system undergoes rapid and dramatic changes, an adequate supply and distribution of appropriately trained social workers has never been more essential to the public's health. The Titles VII and VIII programs are critical to help institutions and programs respond to these current and emerging challenges and ensure that all Americans have access to appropriate and timely health services.

NASW ACTION

NASW, in partnership with the Friends of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Coalition and with the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC), met with members of Congress, sent joint letters, assisted in testimony, and participated in Capitol Hill events to advocate for increased program funding. NASW is committed to working towards improving the recruitment and retention levels of the public health workforce, as well as ensuring that public health professionals are adequately trained and that social workers are part of this process.

Federal Workers Compensation Claims

NASW supports the introduction of the Clinical Social Workers' Recognition Act of 2005 (S.127/H.R. 234) by Sen. Inouye (D-HI) and Rep. Towns (D-NY). This legislation would authorize the use of clinical social workers to conduct evaluations to determine work-related emotional and mental illnesses for federal employees who have applied for Workers' Compensation coverage.

Currently, the law restricts the types of positions of mental health providers who can perform mental health evaluations for federal employees, excluding social workers. The code was last amended in 1974 and much has changed since that time in the delivery of mental health services and the recognition of social workers as critical to mental health care in the United States.

NASW ACTION

NASW staff made a number of visits to the Hill to educate targeted staff and members of Congress on the advancement of social work over the past thirty years and to gain support for the legislation. This work will continue in 2006.

LOAN FORGIVENESS

Loan Forgiveness and the Higher Education Act (HEA)

Once again, as the year came to a close, action had not yet been completed on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Both the House and Senate included HEA provisions in their respective budget reconciliation bills, but final action on reconciliation is still pending. There is also a possibility that the HEA provisions could be stripped out of the budget bill and considered separately. Under consideration is an extension of HEA through March 2006. The House provisions in the budget bill mirror those in the College Access and Opportunity Act (H.R.609), approved by the Education and Workforce Committee in July and the Senate provisions are identical to those included in the Higher Education Amendments (S.1614), approved by the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) in September.

The House provisions include a new loan forgiveness program that is available for social workers who work in child welfare. The program was incorporated into a section of the bill that provides loan forgiveness to professionals in "areas of national need." Social workers also could qualify for loan forgiveness as "individual[s] who is [are] employed [in an] area that suffers from a critical lack of qualified personnel." The "national need" program would forgive up to \$5,000 of student loan debt after five years of employment. New appropriations (funding) would be needed to implement the program, which in the current environment may prove even more challenging than getting the program authorized.

The Senate provisions do not include any new loan forgiveness provisions specifically for social workers, but do include a modification that could assist social workers in repaying loans. The provision, which was supported by NASW, amends the current Income Contingent Repayment (ICR) program. Under the ICR, graduates pay a percentage of their income (around 20 percent) for 25 years; after 25 years, any remaining balance is forgiven. The new provision would shorten the repayment period to 10 years for borrowers with jobs in the "public sector." Public sector is defined as emergency management, government, public safety, law enforcement, public health, education (including early childhood education), and public interest legal services.

NASW ACTION

NASW is continuing to support all the loan forgiveness provisions that could assist social workers in any practice area. The Association also convened a conference call with NASW chapters to promote loan forgiveness on the state level and developed a loan forgiveness advocacy tool kit. The tool kit is posted on the ANSWER and NASW Web sites:

<http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/loanToolkit/default.asp>

Additional information is posted on NASW's loan forgiveness advocacy page:

<http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/loanForgiveness.asp>

MENTAL HEALTH

Clinical Social Work Medicare Equity Act (CSWMEA)

Because of a provision in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, clinical social workers may no longer bill Medicare directly for psychotherapy services to clients residing in skilled nursing facilities. The situation is complicated by the severely inadequate national policy on the provision of mental health services under Medicare. On May 26, 2005, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Reps. Fortney "Pete" Stark (D-CA) and James Leach (R-IA) reintroduced the Clinical Social Work Medicare Equity Act of 2005 (S.1148/H.R.2736), to address this issue. The Senate Finance Committee briefly considered the bill in 2003, but it did not pass. For more information, see NASW's Web site:

<http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/alerts/060305.asp>

NASW ACTION

The Association has been working with key senators and representatives to gain support for the legislation and is now seeking co-sponsors in the House and Senate. NASW is also building grassroots membership support for the measure in target states and congressional districts.

Mental Health Services Appropriations

Congress finished the Labor-HHS appropriations bill funding the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for FY2006 in late December. The President's budget for SAMHSA and the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) included small cuts, and the final bill generally level funded most programs. Congress targeted the domestic appropriations bill for across the board cuts to reach total spending targets. It is increasingly likely that funding levels for FY'07 may dip below FY'06 levels for many domestic discretionary programs and NASW will need to be very active in support of adequate funding in the new year.

NASW ACTION

NASW is working with its coalition partners in the Mental Health Liaison Group to support increased funding levels for mental health and other SAMHSA programs. NASW staff made a number of visits to the Hill to support appropriations for the agency in 2005 and expects to do so again in 2006.

Medicaid Spending

The Bush Administration and GOP congressional leaders continued to seek large cuts in federal expenditures for Medicaid. The Administration proposed dramatic cuts in Targeted Case Management services, which NASW vigorously opposed, along with other cuts including higher beneficiary cost sharing requirements. Concurrent with its legislative strategy, the Administration granted states increased flexibility through the waiver process to enact major changes to their programs. Through its participation with a Medicaid coalition, NASW continued to resist these overly broad grants of authority to the states to reduce program requirements. Meanwhile, states continued to grapple with record high Medicaid expenditures, resulting in tremendous federal and state interest in capping program expenditures.

NASW ACTION

NASW strongly advocated against federal Medicaid cuts in 2005 and will continue this advocacy in 2006. NASW works closely with several national coalitions of health care and human needs advocates to vigorously oppose tax cuts and reductions in health and human services programs. In addition, NASW has worked to educate key members of Congress about the vital role of Medicaid in financing public mental health services.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity (H.R.1402)

Political opposition from business and House GOP leaders has stymied NASW and its coalition partners' support for passage of the "Paul Wellstone Equitable Mental Health Treatment Act." Senate Republican

leadership promised lead sponsors Sens. Peter Domenici (R-NM) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA) to consider the bill early in 2004, but this did not happen. Lead House sponsor Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) told NASW staff in 2005 that the overwhelming need is to boost political support for mental health parity as all of the factual arguments of opponents have been answered.

NASW ACTION

In conjunction with the Mental Health Liaison Group, NASW supports passage of full mental and behavioral health parity. Given the increased influence of conservatives in Congress, prospects for the legislation weakened in 2005 and increasing support for the bill will be difficult in 2006.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Currently, Social Security is under the most severe assault in its history. President Bush's proposal allowing workers to divert a portion of their Social Security contributions to private accounts would profoundly undermine the entire system. It would cut Social Security benefits by 41 percent by 2066, impose large transition costs of nearly \$5 trillion over 20 years, and dramatically worsen America's debt. Moreover, benefits would be cut for all, even those who do not choose private accounts. For 70 years, Social Security has been the bedrock of income security for virtually all Americans, providing benefits to retirees, women, children, those with disabilities, as well as the survivors of retired and deceased workers. NASW believes that this vital anti-poverty program is the bridge that spans class, race, income, and generations. Therefore, the Association opposes the President's proposal to privatize or radically alter the foundation of Social Security.

NASW ACTION

NASW, in concert with national coalitions such as the Campaign for America's Future, AARP, AFL-CIO, Alliance for Retired Americans, Congressional Black Caucus, and others, has consistently opposed the President's proposal to privatize Social Security. The Association to date has attended over 10 policy briefings concerning the President's proposal, as well as sent a letter to the entire Congress outlining NASW's opposition to Social Security reformation. Additionally, through participation in a letter drop and extensive advocacy visits, the Association has encouraged House and Senate members to oppose any plan that attempts to privatize Social Security. President Bush's Social Security plan had minimal traction in 2005.

WELFARE

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act/TANF

As 2005 came to a close, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) received a 12th extension. This extension runs through March 31, 2006. It is also possible that TANF reauthorization will be enacted as part of the budget reconciliation bill. The House included its version of reauthorization in their budget bill; the Senate did not. Senators continue to push to have TANF reauthorization considered separately, but a final decision has not yet been made.

Additional information is posted on NASW's welfare reauthorization advocacy page:

<http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/welfare/default.asp>

NASW ACTION

Most recently, NASW has focused its efforts on removing or revising a drug testing provision in the House-passed bill (H.R.240). The provision, offered as an amendment by Rep. Phil English (R-PA), would require states to drug test all welfare recipients who they suspect of using illegal drugs. If recipients test positive, all cash assistance to the family would be eliminated.

NASW also has continued to provide leadership on provisions designed to assist TANF recipients, both adults and children, with disabilities and other barriers. The provisions, included in the bill passed by the Senate Finance Committee, but not in the House bill, would allow states to continue to provide rehabilitation services to families as long as necessary, permit states to count caring for a child with a disability as work, and require states to review cases and attempt to make contact with families prior to imposing any sanction for noncompliance.

CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK

Managed Care and Third-Party Payers

On November 2, the Physician Fee Schedule was released in the Federal Register and revealed a 4.4 percent Medicare reimbursement reduction for clinical social workers and other Medicare providers. NASW is advocating with other professional associations to have the fee reduction withdrawn.

G codes have been developed for tobacco cessation counseling. Although clinical social workers were included in the development of these codes, it is unclear at this time whether they will have access to them when seeking reimbursement in independent practice.

Congress is in the process of developing legislation for a pay-for-performance reimbursement program. Medicare has already developed pilot programs across the country to test this concept. Clinical social workers may also be reimbursed by pay-for-performance sometime in the future. NASW is involved in developing draft legislation on this issue and in working with other associations and organizations to provide clinical input for indicators for pay-for-performance.

Meetings

On October 5, staff attended an invitational meeting, Provider Partnership Team Meeting, at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in Baltimore, MD. NASW participated and provided input on pertinent provider discussion topics that may affect social workers in the future.

Staff attended the American Medical Association Annual Current Procedural Terminology Health Care Professional Advisory Committee Meeting and the Current Procedural Terminology Editorial Panel Meeting in Seattle, Washington on October 20–22 to review and approve new and revised descriptors of Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) Codes and learned the CPT changes for 2006.

At this meeting, NASW staff member, Mirean Coleman, received the 2005 Current Procedural Terminology Staff Liaison Award for outstanding services. This award is presented to a specialty society staff member who shows excellence and outstanding support of the CPT process and ensures correct coding usage by association members.

Presentation

NASW's Legal Defense Fund sponsored a teleconference, "Documenting for Medicare and Social Work Record Retention," on October 19. Mirean Coleman and Sherri Morgan, associate counsel, presented the one-hour teleconference to more than 268 social workers nationwide.

FIELD ORGANIZING

Grassroots Activities

In 2005, 2,067 individuals sent 12,551 letters and/or e-mails through Congress Web to their Congressional representatives. The issues that generated the most grassroots efforts included appropriations/budget, loan forgiveness, the Title IV-E child welfare training program, and TANF. A table showing activity levels in all issues follows.

| Subject Area | Number of Letters/E-mails |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Appropriations/Budget | 3895 |
| Loan Forgiveness | 1613 |
| Child Welfare: Title IV-E Training | 1162 |
| TANF Reauthorization | 1145 |
| Education: Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program | 782 |
| Medicare Clinical Social Work | 516 |
| Mental Health Parity | 506 |
| Compose Your Own | 463 |
| Child Welfare: CAPTA Appropriations | 386 |
| Faith-Based Initiative | 364 |
| Health Care: Association Health Plans | 337 |
| Minimum Wage | 277 |
| Aging: Advance Directives | 254 |
| National Center for Social Work Research Act | 235 |
| Social Worker Safety | 212 |
| Judicial Nominations | 208 |
| Hate Crimes | 135 |
| International: Equitable Economic Development | 58 |
| Health: Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2005 | 3 |

On October 20, NASW helped coordinate the Social Work Policy Practice Forum on Capitol Hill. Three hundred students and staff from various social work programs came to Washington, DC to learn about policy opportunities for social workers. Many of the attendees participated in visits with their members of Congress to talk about loan forgiveness, Medicaid, and the Title IV-E child welfare training program.

Presentations

During 2005, staff made 15 presentations to students, practicing social workers, social work educators, and conference attendees.

Web Site Development

Twenty-five action alerts and 13 updates were posted on the Association's Web site this year. You can view the alerts and updates on NASW's Web site: www.socialworkers.org/advocacy

POLITICAL ACTION FOR CANDIDATE ELECTION (PACE)

Swearing-In Ceremonies

Government relations staff rang in the New Year welcoming the 109th Congress by attending the swearing-in ceremonies of old and new members of Congress. They attended a total of 12 swearing-in ceremonies: five for members of the U.S. Senate (4 Democrats, 1 Republican), including social worker Barbara Mikulski from Maryland, and seven for members of the U.S. House, including newly elected Allyson Schwartz, social worker from Pennsylvania, District 13.

108th Congress Voting Record

A Voting Record for the 108th Congress can be viewed by members by visiting the PACE page on NASW's Web site at: <http://www.socialworkers.org/pace/votingRec.asp>

PACE 2004 Election Analysis

A PACE Election Analysis Report and a 2004 Field Organizer Project Report were written and distributed to NASW's Board and chapters. The PACE election summary can be viewed by members on the PACE page on NASW's Web site at:

<http://www.socialworkers.org/verif.asp?dest=/pace/electionReport2005.pdf>

Social Workers Serving in Elective Office

PACE collects information about social workers serving in state and local elected office and compiles a guide which is updated biennially in the year following federal election cycles. After the November 2004 election, PACE contacted chapters to receive the most up-to-date information about social workers serving in state and local office. Chapters were asked to complete and submit a form to PACE by January 2005 for each elected official in their state who holds a BSW, MSW, or DSW. The elected official must have taken office, or continued serving in office, as of January 2005. PACE worked with chapters to complete and submit this important information. The guide was completed and posted on the PACE section of NASW's Web site at http://www.socialworkers.org/pace/state_swers.asp Chapters identified 178 social workers serving in state and local office.

PACE Poll

PACE commissioned a national, random survey of NASW members. The survey results showed that NASW members are politically engaged and hold a politically active NASW in high regard.

2006 Congressional Endorsements and Contributions

The national PACE Board of Trustees made three rounds of formal congressional endorsements in 2005, PACE trustees authorized endorsements and contributions totaling \$64,000 to 13 Senate incumbents, including one social worker, Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI). Trustees also authorized endorsements and contributions totaling \$45,000 to 25 house incumbents and one challenger candidate. The U.S. House endorsements included social workers Barbara Lee (D-CA-09), Susan Davis (D-CA-53), Ed Towns (D-NY-10), and Allyson Schwartz (D-PA-13).

Candidate Interviews

As part of its endorsement assessment process, PACE staff met with and interviewed challenger candidates running for Congress in Tennessee, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Connecticut.

Fundraisers

Government relations staff attended 65 fundraisers from January through December 2005. They attended fundraisers for six Democratic members of the U.S. Senate, including Social Worker Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and four Republican members of the U.S. Senate. They also attended 45 fundraisers for members of the U.S. House (35 Democrat and 10 Republican), including fundraisers for Social Workers Barbara Lee (D-CA-09), Susan Davis (D-CA-53), first-term Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz (D-PA-13), and challenger candidate, former Congressman Ciro Rodriguez (D), who is facing a competitive primary election as he runs again for his TX-28 seat. In addition, government relations staff attended 29 donor council events (16 Republican, 13 Democrat). Donor councils are groups that provide access to members of Congress or a political party through meetings, issue briefings, and other events.