July 13, 2017: Advocacy spotlight on Senate considers health-bill revisions; AMA advocacy continues to focus on patient impact

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As Congress returned from its Independence Day recess this week, the Senate focused once again on its effort to rewrite portions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). A revised draft of the Senate’s proposed Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 (BCRA) was released today, and new spending and coverage estimates from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) will be released soon. The AMA is closely examining the proposal to see if it aligns with the Association's objectives for health-system reform.

The AMA expressed its opposition to previous versions of BCRA, most recently in a letter (PDF) sent to the Senate on June 26, based largely on the discussion draft's projected impact on the number of Americans who will become uninsured and the reduced federal support for Medicaid. Direct written and personal communications with members of Congress represent one component of a broad-based advocacy campaign that the AMA has been pursuing throughout 2017, highlights of which include:

- Focus groups held during March and April in Chattanooga, Denver, Philadelphia and Phoenix to hear directly from practicing physicians about their views of the benefits and shortcomings of the ACA and the health care system generally.
- Patient-physician roundtable discussions held last April in Atlanta and Denver, where the impact of health insurance coverage on patients and physicians was explored in detail.
- Public opinion polls conducted in select states, revealing that registered voters support Medicaid and are generally concerned about the direction Congress has been taking in rewriting current law.
- Collaborative efforts with patient groups, hospitals and other providers, including media events held in Colorado, Ohio, Nevada, and West Virginia to share personal stories about the impact that access to affordable, meaningful health insurance coverage has had on individuals, families and communities.
An extensive patient and physician grassroots network campaign involving telephone calls, emails, social media contacts and meetings with key senators.

Physicians and patients who want to engage in the advocacy campaign to preserve access to affordable and meaningful health insurance coverage are encouraged to visit the AMA's campaign website, at Patientsbeforepolitics.org. The site explores the AMA's health reform objectives in depth and provides resource documents, patient profiles and grassroots action links to facilitate communications with their Senators.

More articles in this issue

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- July 13, 2017: Judicial Advocacy Update