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Congress Begins Work on FY 2007 Budget

On March 16th, the Senate narrowly approved its FY 2007 Budget Resolution by a vote of 51 to 49. Notably absent from the resolution were reconciliation instructions to cut taxes or mandatory spending. Senator Gregg (R-NH), Chair of the Senate Budget Committee, acknowledged while drafting the resolution that there was little political appetite for a repeat of last year's battle over entitlement cuts. And Congress has yet to finish the tax cuts provided for under reconciliation instructions in the FY 2006 budget resolution.

During markup of the resolution a week earlier, the Senate Budget Committee rejected the President's proposed \$500 million cut to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). SSBG is a capped entitlement that funds a range of services including child welfare, child protective services, and child abuse prevention and intervention. Senator Grassley (R-IA), a long-time champion of SSBG, offered an amendment in committee to ensure that SSBG funding would remain at its current level of \$1.7 billion, saying that "this funding cut wasn't fair or well-timed." Grassley went on to note that "Congress just enacted legislation that could affect child welfare programs. It wouldn't have been right to force more changes on states when they already need to adapt to recent changes, and services to children and families could have been at risk." Grassley's amendment passed in committee by voice-vote.

What is the Congressional Budget Resolution?

As part of the annual budget and appropriations process, Congress develops a *Congressional Budget Resolution* that establishes the framework for all tax and spending legislation in that year. In addition to the overall tax and spending allotments for the year, the budget resolution may include reconciliation instructions to cut taxes and/or mandatory spending, as we saw last year. Reconciliation instructions protect legislation from filibuster in the Senate, and limit debate and amendments. The resolution is not sent to the President and does not become law; however, appropriators may not exceed the spending caps set in the resolution, making this perhaps the most important part of the federal budget process.

Advocates helped contribute to a significant victory for human services during floor debate. Outside of committing to level-fund SSBG, the Senate Budget Committee had reported out a pretty bleak Senate Budget Resolution. The committee set the overall FY 2007 discretionary funding level at \$873 billion, a level so low that it would have forced appropriators to cut funding from FY 2006 levels. When the full Senate considered the resolution, Senators Specter (R-PA) and Harkin (D-IA) offered an amendment



to add \$7 billion intended to restore funding within the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education (Labor, HHS, Ed) appropriations bill to FY 2005 levels. Thousands of advocates from across the country called their Senators in support of the amendment, which passed handily by a vote of 73 to 27. [Click here to see how your Senators voted.](#)

Next Steps:

The House is expected begin work on their version of the FY 2007 budget resolution the week of March 27th, though that could get pushed back. PCA America will press the House, beginning with the House Budget Committee, to follow the Senate's lead and provide an appropriate funding allocation for overall discretionary spending in this year's budget resolution.

Expected points of contention between the House and Senate include:

- *Reconciliation instructions for tax and mandatory spending cuts.* The Senate did not include this in their resolution, but it is unclear at this point if the House will follow suit.
- *Funding for Labor, HHS, Ed appropriations.* The Senate added a total of \$10 billion in discretionary funding directed towards Labor, HHS, Ed programs billion – \$7 billion through the Specter-Harkin amendment, and \$3 billion added to LIHEAP through a floor amendment offered by Sen. Reed (D-RI). The House is not expected to be as generous.
- *Reconciliation instructions reserving funding for energy exploration in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).* The Senate included ANWR in their resolution, but Rep. Jim Nussle (R-IA-1), Chair of the House Budget Committee, stated that the House resolution will not include ANWR. While not directly related to our issues, if Congress does not reach an agreement on ANWR, it could throw a wrench into the entire federal budget process.

Congressional Briefings in the Works to Showcase EBAH

Prevent Child Abuse America is one of several cosponsoring organizations planning two Washington, DC congressional briefings to highlight the *Education Begins at Home Act* (EBAH) and garner additional support for the bills. The briefings are intended to educate a sizeable audience of House and Senate staff about the home visit field – what it is and isn't, the variety of ways it benefits children and families, and what the research says about home visiting as a service delivery approach. Program sites and client families are being recruited to speak at the briefings. Congressional staff from EBAH lead sponsors will be present to answer questions about the legislation from their colleagues.

A briefing has been scheduled for April 6th on the Senate side; a second briefing will take place the following morning in a House office building. For more information, please contact Jane Ascroft or Bridget Gavaghan at PCA America.

The Education Begins at Home Act (S 503 and HR 3628)

As reported in previous issues of the *Prevention Advocate*, EBAH would extend to a broad range of families the opportunity to benefit from Healthy Families America and other quality home visitation programs. The legislation would provide \$500 million over three years to help states establish or expand quality home visitation programs. Of the \$500 million authorized, \$400 million would be provided to states on a formula basis to expand and enhance home visiting programs, while the remaining \$100 million would be divided between two competitive grants to reach military families and families with English Language Learners.



The growing list of cosponsors follows. Please visit [PCA America's website](#) for information on how you can ask your members of Congress to support EBAH.

HR 3628 Cosponsors (as of 3/17/06)

Rep. Barrow (D-GA-12)**
Rep. Bonner (R-AL-1)
Rep. Boswell (D-IA-3)
Rep. Clay (D-MO-1)
Rep. Davis (D-IL-7)*
Rep. DeLauro (D-CT-3)
Rep. Doggett (D-TX-25)
Rep. Edwards (D-TX-17)
Rep. Grijalva (D-AZ-7)*
Rep. Inslee (D-WA-1)
Rep. Kuhl (R-NY-29)*
Rep. LaHood (R-IL-18)
Rep. Larson (D-CT-1)
Rep. Lewis (D-GA-5)
Rep. McCotter (R-MI-11)
Rep. McDermott (D-WA-7)
Rep. McHugh (R-NY-23)
Rep. McNulty (D-NY-21)
Rep. Michaud (D-ME-2)
Rep. Moore (D-KS-3)
Rep. Moore (D-WI-4)
Rep. Moran (D-VA-8)
Rep. Osborne (R-NE-3)*
Rep. Platts (R-PA-19)*
Rep. Price (D-NC-4)
Rep. Renzi (R-AZ-1)
Rep. Souder (R-IN-3)*

S 503 Cosponsors (as of 3/17/06)

Sen. Bond (R-MO)
Sen. Cantwell (D-WA)
Sen. Clinton (D-NY)*
Sen. Collins (R-ME)
Sen. DeWine (R-OH)*
Sen. Durbin (D-IL)
Sen. Kerry (D-MA)
Sen. Landrieu (D-LA)
Sen. Lautenberg (D-NJ)
Sen. Rockefeller (D-WV)
Sen. Smith (R-OR)
Sen. Snowe (R-ME)
Sen. Talent (R-MO)

*Sits on HELP or Education Reform

** Sits on Education and the Workforce full committee

Combat Meth Act Becomes Law **Congress Contemplates Next Steps**

The *Combat Meth Act of 2005* (S 103 and HR 314) recently became law as part of the *USA Patriot Act* reauthorization (HR 3199). Introduced by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Jim Talent (R-MO) and Representative Roy Blunt (R-MO-7), the Combat Meth Act supports state Drug Endangered Children (DEC) programs, among other provisions. These collaborative efforts combine resources from law enforcement, public health, and social services in an attempt to meet the needs of children who are affected by clandestine labs. It also establishes funds to provide specialized training to both law enforcement officials and attorneys who deal with methamphetamine offenses. Additionally, it reclassifies pseudoephedrine, making it more difficult for individuals to purchase mass quantities of the drug, a major component in the manufacture of methamphetamine.

Last year, congressional sponsors attached the Combat Meth Act to what was viewed as “must-pass” legislation, reauthorization of the USA Patriot Act. The House passed the conference report



containing the Combat Meth Act in December, but the legislation stalled temporarily in the Senate over concerns that the USA Patriot Act reauthorization legislation did not go far enough to protect civil liberties. With the reauthorization deadline looming, the White House negotiated a deal with a contingent of the Senate holdouts, enabling the Senate to pass the bill by a vote of 89 to 10.

Members of Congress are now moving towards next steps in curbing meth abuse. The House included meth-related provisions in House-passed legislation to reauthorize the Office of National Drug Control Policy (HR 2829), instructing the Office to:

- Conduct a study of meth-related activities by different DEC programs administered by states;
- Develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses the increased threat from meth;
- Establish the National Methamphetamine Information Clearinghouse (NMIC) consisting of a toll-free number and a website designed to share information regarding successful law enforcement, treatment, environmental, social services, and other programs related to the production, use, or effects of meth;
- Prepare a report on meth usage in the U.S.; and
- Convene an international summit on meth use and production.

The House passed HR 2829 on March 9th by a vote of 399 to 5. The bill has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. As the impacts of meth use gain more and more national media attention, expect to see a continued trend of Congress attaching meth-related provisions to moving legislation. We will keep you posted on provisions that relate directly to the impacts on parents and children.

Senate Conferees Fight to Keep Charitable Giving Tax Incentives & Reform Provisions in Tax Bill

We've all heard quite a bit about the FY 2006 reconciliation bill that cut funding to mandatory programs. That bill passed earlier this year. But PCA America hasn't dedicated quite as much ink to sharing information on the FY 2006 reconciliation instructions to cut taxes by \$70 billion over 5 years. The House and Senate passed very different tax reconciliation bills (HR 4297 and S 2020), and conferees are struggling to reach consensus. PCA America is monitoring how the negotiations progress, as the Senate bill contains charitable giving tax incentives along with reforms on how the charitable sector operates.

The two primary charitable giving tax incentives included in the Senate bill are: a deduction for people who do not itemize on their tax returns for cash contributions over \$210 (\$420 for joint filers); and a provision allowing individuals over the age 70 ½ to donate to charities from their IRA funds without incurring a tax penalty. The charitable sector reforms include: penalties for charities involved in illegal tax shelters; increases in excise taxes for nonprofits found to be "self-dealing;" limits to deductions for charitable donations of clothes and household items; reforms to donor advised funds; and new authority for the IRS to disclose to state officials information related to proposed actions regarding tax-exempt organizations.

Independent Sector has been monitoring the legislation closely and has identified a few areas of concern within the reform provisions, particularly those related to donor advised funds. If you are interested in finding out more about the charitable giving and reform provisions of the tax reconciliation bill, please visit [Independent Sector's website](#).



House-passed Bill would Establish National Child Abuse and Neglect Registry ***National Sex Offender Registry also Included***

On March 7th, the House passed by voice-vote the *Children's Safety and Violent Crime Reduction Act of 2006* (HR 4472), an anti-crime bill that would establish a national child abuse and neglect registry, as well as a national sex offender registry, among other provisions. HR 4472 incorporated much of the sex offender language from the *Child Safety Act* (HR 3132), passed by the House last fall.

National Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Provisions

The bill requires the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Attorney General, to create a national registry of substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect. Registry information would be limited to the name of the perpetrator and the nature of the substantiated case. Information contained in the national registry would be accessible to any Federal, State, Indian tribe, or local government entity, or any agent of such entities, that has a need for such information in order to carry out its responsibilities under law to protect children from child abuse and neglect.

Summary of Key Sex Offender Provisions

Among other provisions, HR 4472:

- Requires each state to maintain a sex offender registry, and for the Attorney General to maintain a national registry. Sex offenders would register in jurisdictions where the offender was convicted, resides, is an employee, and is a student. Registration must include the offender's name, address, Social Security number, name and address of employer and/or school, license plate number, photograph, DNA information, and fingerprints.
- Establishes three tiers of sex offenders based on the seriousness of the crime, whether the victim is a child, and the offender's criminal history. The tiers would have different registration requirements.
- Makes all registered information, except for the offender's Social Security number, available to the public through the national website. It allows jurisdictions the option of exempting "tier 1" juvenile offenders from appearing on the website, but not other juvenile offenders.
- Establishes an Office on Sexual Violence and Crimes Against Children in the U.S. Department of Justice.
- Increases mandatory penalties for violent crimes and sexual offenses against children.
- Requires background checks and checks of national crime information databases and state child abuse registries before approval of foster or adoptive placements.

Immigration Bill Could Punish Organizations Serving Undocumented Immigrants

A provision in a House-passed immigration bill has raised eyebrows among some advocates who are concerned that it could be interpreted to mean that organizations – including prevention organizations – providing a variety of services to undocumented immigrants could be subject to criminal penalty. The *Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005* (HR 4437), introduced last December by House Judiciary Committee Chair James Sensenbrenner (R-WI-5), defines "alien smuggling" to include activities that assist or transport people known to be in the United States unlawfully; any person considered an alien smuggler under the law would then be subject to federal prison time.



The Sensenbrenner bill passed the House by a vote of 239 to 182; consideration of the bill has now moved to the Senate. For more information, visit the National Council of La Raza's website at <http://www.nclr.org>.

Time is Running Out to Save Money on PCA America's 2006 Conference Registration! ***Early Bird Rate ends March 31st***

The early bird registration deadline is coming up very soon! Your registration to the **PCA America National Conference – America's Families: We All Play a Supporting Role** – must be received or postmarked **no later than March 31** in order for you to receive the lowest **registration rate of \$310 per person**. From April 1 through May 5, the regular registration rate of \$375 per person will be in effect. Save yourself a chunk of change by registering NOW! You may register online at our website (www.preventchildabuse.org) if paying with a credit card; if paying by check, you should send it in the mail with your registration forms.

The conference will be held May 21-24, 2006, in San Diego, California, at the Town & Country Resort. A special rate of \$129/night is available if you book your hotel room before April 20 and mention the Prevent Child Abuse America conference. (800-772-8527)

An exciting roster of educational sessions awaits you at the PCA America national conference, as well as opportunities for formal and informal networking with peers from all over the country who value America's children and families as much as you do.

Bring the whole family! The conference will feature many activities for parents and children together, such as two family-friendly workshops, Kids Korner with crafts and games, and the Lounge – a cool place to relax and get to know your fellow attendees and their families. Plus the San Diego area has lots to offer by way of family fun – the world-famous San Diego Zoo, LEGOLand, SeaWorld and Balboa Park, to name just a few. Visit the While In San Diego section on our conference website for more information about conference programming and fun things to do while in San Diego – www.preventchildabuse.org

Contact Rebecca Loden (rloden@preventchildabuse.org or 312-334-6809) or Ann Johnson (ajohnson@preventchildabuse.org or 312-334-6845) with any questions.

Please pass this information on to your staff, colleagues, friends in the field, and anyone else who works to support America's families. We hope to see you in San Diego in just two short months!

Writer: Bridget Gavaghan

Contributing Writer: Jane Ascroft

Special Contributor: Tom Birch by way of the *Washington Memorandum* (If you would like to subscribe to the *Washington Memorandum*, contact Tom Birch at bircht@earthlink.net).

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