

## DC Update

May 23, 2008

### Supplemental spending

On Thursday, the Senate passed their version of the supplemental war spending bill by a 75-22 veto proof margin. Included in the measure was funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan along with domestic spending priorities including a moratorium for seven Medicaid regulations and a rescission of the SCHIP August 17 directive. The bill now returns to the House of Representatives where the amended legislation will need to be voted on after the recess. However, obstacles remain in that chamber. The Blue Dog Coalition, a group of fiscally conservative Democrats, along with Republican members object to some provisions, particularly the domestic spending measures. NACBHDD will update members as the legislation moves.

### Housing

The Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee approved “The Federal Housing Finance Regulatory Reform Act of 2008”. The legislation would establish a national housing trust fund for the production and preservation of rental housing for low income individuals. The House has already cleared similar legislation. The National Housing Trust Fund Campaign has been working to get a national housing trust fund that would help secure housing for low income individuals, including people with disabilities on fixed incomes. The Senate bill would:

- Create a Housing Trust Fund from 65% of the resources generated by a small portion of Fannie Mae’s and Freddie Mac’s new business. (The other 35% would go to a “Capital Magnet Fund” to assist Community Development Financial Institutions)
- Target 75% of the Housing Trust Fund for extremely low income individuals
- Enable the Housing Trust Fund to accept other funds that Congress may designate in the future. (*National Low Income Housing Coalition*)

The bill does however; divert 50% of the money, from the housing trust fund, in the first year and 25% in the second year to a foreclosure prevention program. NACBHDD will monitor the legislation as it goes to the Senate floor and through conference with the House.

## **ADA**

As reported earlier this month, ADA restoration negotiations have been ongoing between the disabilities and business communities and it appears that the two sides are getting closer to an agreement. This will still be a difficult road ahead for Congress to pass the provision and have it signed by the president this year. As more information is confirmed, NACBHDD will update members.

The goal of ADA restoration is to restore Congress' intent from shifting the focus of defining a person "truly" disabled, to whether the person was treated unfairly on the basis of disability (actual, past or perceived). In recent years, courts have narrowed Congressional intent in their holdings of ADA cases. In a bi-partisan movement along with the business community, disabilities groups have urged Congress to pass legislation that would restore the original intent of the ADA.

## **Addictions and Mental Health Parity**

In March, NACBHDD along with representatives from addictions and mental health advocacy organizations were briefed by Senate staff regarding an initial Senate offer from Senators Kennedy and Donmenici to the House on parity legislation. At that time it was emphasized that this was not an offer sent on behalf of the entire coalition of business and insurance groups who joined the mental health community in supporting the Senate legislation, S. 558. Staff indicated that a formal conference would not take place, but instead negotiations would occur informally. They also indicated they were hopeful that the entire coalition would ultimately support this process and proposal. Since that time, House negotiators have sent a counteroffer. While this has been a long process, the counter offer is an important step towards enacting parity this year. NACBHDD will update members as further analysis is collected.