

9/4/2020

Happy Friday REDC Members!

Here's your update for today:

SERVE Act:

- We collaborated with the TRICARE for Kids Coalition to ensure that the SERVE Act language from the Senate was prioritized in their joint coalition letter to Conferees.
- Additionally, the NDAA “conference” and later vote is still in progress. I haven't heard of exactly when it will be on the calendar, but in recent House Majority Leader Hoyer's communications with Dems, they don't have it on their calendar for September. It may still pop up, but we may be looking at it coming in November instead.

COVID Package & Related Resources/Information

I. COVID Senate Republican Proposal

- a. The new Senate Republican proposal is expected to include \$300 in boosted weekly federal unemployment benefits through the end of December;
- b. Another round of funding for the Paycheck Protection Program for small businesses;
- c. \$105B for education;
- d. Liability protections for companies, schools, and health care providers
- e. Billions to the USPS by converting an existing loan into a grant
- f. GOP leaders are growing confident their bill will garner 51 votes from the 53-seat GOP caucus and increase pressure on Democrats to make a deal. Some aides say the measure could be attached to a continuing resolution to fund the government past September 30.
- g. Democratic leaders have repeatedly rejected a piecemeal approach to COVID relief. Any legislation will need 60 votes, including backing from some Democrats, to advance in the Senate—an unlikely outcome.

II. Extension of Legal Protections to Health Providers

- a. Protections granted under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act preempt state and local laws prohibiting the use of FDA-authorized tests on people in group living facilities and nursing homes.
- b. The goal of the federal policy change is to alleviate fears for nursing homes in the handful of states that had restricted the use of tests in the facilities.
 - i. Some nursing homes had antigen tests in hand, but have held back using them over liability concerns.
 - ii. The FDA recently said health care providers can use antigen tests off-label to screen asymptomatic individuals for COVID-19, but urged strategies like repeated testing of individuals to help infection control.

III. HHS Bidding Out \$250M Communications Contract

- a. The Department of Health and Human Services is bidding out a more than \$250M contract to a communications firm as it seeks to “defeat despair and inspire hope, sharing best practices for businesses to operate in the new normal and instill confidence to return to work and restart the economy,” build a “coalition of spokespeople” around the country, provide important public health, therapeutic and vaccine information as the country reopens and give Americans information on the phases of a reopening.
- b. The main part of the contract will be creating public service advertisements to persuade people to “engage in behavior that actively promote health behaviors or good citizenship.”

IV. REDC Joins MHLG Letter in Support of \$4.5 Billion in SAMHSA Funding—*letter attached*

- a. The REDC co-signed a letter to House and Senate leadership in support of appropriating \$4.5B across key Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants, suicide prevention programs, and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics to address the wave of mental health and substance use triggered by the pandemic.
- V. Study Shows 25% of People in the U.S. are Experiencing Symptoms of Depression**
 - a. Published in the current issue of the American Medical Association journal, the study found nearly a quarter of people in the U.S. are experiencing symptoms of depression.
 - i. This is nearly 3x the number before the COVID-19 pandemic began.
 - ii. These rates are higher than what was seen in the general population after other large-scale traumas like September 11, Hurricane Katrina and the Hong Kong unrest.
 - iii. The study results can be found [here](#).

ACA Watch

- I. GA Governor Wants Out of ACA Health Exchange**
 - a. Under a proposal from Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, Georgians seeking to purchase health insurance would no longer have the option of shopping for plans on one website as they can now on the ACA site, Healthcare.gov. Instead, they would have to seek out commercial insurance plans on their own.
 - b. In the application to the Trump administration, that state says its proposal would insure 25,000 more Georgians and “create a competitive private insurance marketplace that provides GA residents with better access, improved customer services, and coverage options.”
 - c. Critics contend the proposal would make shopping for health insurance or reenrolling in existing plans more burdensome, causing tens of thousands to lose coverage. Others could face higher premiums, they say. Georgians also use Healthcare.gov as a gateway to enroll in Medicaid, the health plan for the poor. Critics say the proposal would diminish the number of people in that program as well.
 - i. Currently, 450,000 GA residents purchase plans on the federal exchange according to the state.

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