

Issue Update – 112th Congress

Fall – 2012



At a Glance:

The Academy's Legislative Priorities

2012 Farm Bill

The bill funds the majority of our country's food and nutrition programs such as the

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- SNAP-Ed,
- The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- Agriculture Research
- Seniors Farmers Markets

Where is it? → The Senate passed their version of the bill in the Spring. The House has only passed a bill out of The Agriculture Committee.

The Older Americans Act

The bill governs and funds nutrition programs relating to older adults. The most popular programs include the Home Delivered Meals and Congregate Dining.

Where is it? → The bill was referred to the Senate HELP Committee and currently has 16 co-sponsors.

2012 Farm Bill (S.B. 3240/H.R. 6083)

The Farm Bill is the largest piece of legislation for food and nutrition policy, and must be reauthorized every 5 years by Congress. This year marked that deadline and so far a final bill has not been passed. The Senate has passed their bill (S.B. 3240) with a bipartisan vote of 64 to 35. The final language included:

- Cuts \$4.5 billion over 10 years from SNAP.
- Protects funding to SNAP-Ed and allows funds to be used for "physical activity".
- Strengthens SNAP standards by requiring retailers stock 3 out of the 4 staple food categories.
- Protects TEFAP by increasing funding by \$150 million over 10 years.
- Protects the Senior Farmers Market Program.
- Protects the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.
- Protects Agriculture Research.

In July, the House Agriculture Committee passed their version of the bill (H.R. 6083) by a vote of 35 to 11. This version makes much more significant changes to specific food and nutrition programs. Some changes included:

- Cuts \$16 billion over 10 years from SNAP.
- Protected the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, however the language allowed for frozen, canned and dried produce to be included in the program.

Due to the summer drought the House passed a portion of the Farm Bill that addressed disaster relief for farmers. They passed a \$383 million relief package focusing on certain specialty crops (like trees) and livestock. The Senate did not act and the legislation sat idle. Once Congress returns from recess they will be faced with few options for action; pass a one-year extension of the current bill, allow the new Congress to negotiate a deal in 2013 or pass a compromised version of the House and Senate bill before December 31st, 2012.

Older Americans Act (S.B. 3562)

The bill that authorizes nutrition programs for the elderly (congregate dining and home delivered meals) is again up for reauthorization in 2012. While Congress has not acted on passage the Academy worked with Senators Merkley (OR) Franken (MN) and Sanders (VT) to include language to increase access for registered dietitians in the final draft bill. Some of these suggestions include:

- Include RDs in the list of acceptable providers that would work within a Community Care Initiative Demonstration Program.
- Include MNT as one of the allowable services provided within these programs.
- Include nutrition counseling as one of the allowable services provided within these programs.
- Include "nutrition status" as a way to manage chronic disease to help measure success within these programs.

The Senate bill released in September has 16 original co-sponsors. With action unlikely this year, Congress will reintroduce the bill in 2013 and begin work towards reauthorization. Funding for current programs however has been extended through the normal budget process.

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Visiting the PAC booth at FNCE, an Academy Member tells us why she loves being an RD.

At a Glance: The Academy's Legislative Priorities

MNT/Prediabetes

The bill would expand MNT reimbursement through Medicare to individuals with prediabetes.

Where is it? → The bill currently sits in the House Energy and Commerce Committee where it has 20 co-sponsors.

Prevention/CBO Scoring

The bill would allow the government to attach costs or savings to preventive initiatives for the first time; helping create a stronger argument for MNT reimbursement.

Where is it → The bill currently sits in The House Committee on Budget and has 16 co-sponsors.

National Diabetes Commission

The bill would create a new Diabetes Commission to consolidate and increase the effectiveness of the Government's resources to fight the rise in diabetes.

Where is it? → The House version currently sits in the Energy and Commerce Committee while the Senate bill has been referred to the HELP Committee.

The Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act (H.R. 2741)

Otherwise known as "MNT/prediabetes", this bill has slowly gained co-sponsorship since it was introduced in 2011. The bill currently has 20 co-sponsors including Democrats and Republicans but has not received any further action. This bill will have to be reintroduced next year in the new Congress.

Prevention/CBO Scoring (H.R. 6482)

When advocating for H.R. 2741, one question that continues to be asked is, "how much would this bill cost?" This question is difficult to answer because Congress does not identify the costs of preventative initiatives. However a new bill was introduced this September that may help answer this question. Congressman Burgess (TX) and Congresswoman Christensen (VI) introduced H.R. 6482 which would allow the Congressional Budget Office to attach a cost or savings number to preventive initiatives which could include MNT. This bill could help strengthen the argument for expanding MNT coverage to people with prediabetes.

National Diabetes Clinical Care Commission Act (S.B. 3430/H.R. 2960)

Senator Shaheen (NH) has introduced a companion bill to H.R. 2960 which currently has 6 co-sponsors: Senators Boxer (CA), Brown (MA), Cardin (MD), Collins (ME), Kerry (MA) and Klobuchar (MN). Like the House version, the bill would create a commission, comprised of individuals from both the private and public sector, which would evaluate the effectiveness of government actions on diabetes care. The language requires non-physician health care professionals, which could include dietitians and diabetes educators, to serve on the Commission. The primary focus on the Commission would be to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of HHS diabetes programs.
- Identify current activities and critical gaps in federal efforts to support diabetes clinicians.
- Use outcomes-based registry data to evaluate various care models and methods.
- Evaluate and expand education and awareness to health care professionals regarding best practice for the prevention of diabetes.
- Develop and test best methods for outreach and dissemination of education resources related to diabetes prevention and treatments.

Both bills will have to be reintroduced next year when the new Congress is sworn into office.

Additional Updates

The 2013 Public Policy Workshop will take place on March 10th through the 12th, 2013 in Washington, DC at the Omni-Shoreham hotel. The Academy will be providing a training webinar on current legislative issues as well as outlining the PPC job responsibilities. Be on the lookout for more information in early January 2013. To serve as a brief reminder, the general responsibilities of each PPC will be:

- Schedule or help to facilitate the scheduling of meetings with members of Congress for the final day of PPW.
- Act as "table leader" during PPW. Help your members organize how each meeting will be conducted, update them on the legislative issues, facilitate conversation and organize the logistics of who will go to which meeting and how they will get there.
- Provide updates to your Panel and encourage members to attend PPW.

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Congressman Carney (DE) visits a school to learn about improving nutrition in the classroom during Take Your Congressperson to Work.

Sequestration Defined:

Washington-speak for agreed upon, mandatory cuts to government spending, this spending is what is contained in the federal budget.

NDD represented 1/5th of our federal budget and 4.3 percent of our economy (GDP) in 2011. By 2022, under current law NDD will decline to just 2.5 percent, (the lowest level in the past 40 years), while defense would decline to 2.9%

On the Horizon...

Post-election work period (Nov. 12th – Dec. 31st) to address the following issues:

- 2012 Farm Bill
- Medicare physician reimbursements
- Sequestration (fiscal cliff)
- 2010 Bush Tax Cuts Extension
- Alternative Minimum Tax Fix
- Extension of Unemployment Insurance
- Extension of the Payroll Tax Deduction

Take Your Congressperson to Work Campaign

This August Public Policy Coordinators invited their elected officials to their place of work to talk about food and nutrition issues. Members of Congress were invited to schools, senior centers, hospitals and private practice sites. Other members visited district offices and attended town hall meetings.

In order to make next year's Campaign an even bigger success the Academy will be sending out a separate training webinar in early 2013. This training tool will provide more support and information to set up these important meetings for August 2013.

School Nutrition Update

New school meals standards have taken affect and for the first time in 15 years kids are being served healthier meals with less fat, sugar and salt. The evidence-based standards make sure that kids are getting enough to eat while improving the nutrition content of their meals. In response to these new changes, along with a few unfortunate news stories, members of Congress have introduced the "No Hungry Kids Act" (H.R. 6418) which would severely dilute these new standards. The Academy has issued an Action Alert to rally our members to tell Congress to support these important new standards.

Sequestration

Sequestration – a result of Congress failing to find \$1.2 trillion in cuts to the federal budget is set to take effect January 2nd, 2013. These cuts will affect both the Defense Department and as well as the Non Defense Discretionary (NDD) budget which includes: Education, Health, Transportation, Energy, and other government departments and agencies. Currently both of these spending categories will be cut at the same rate. This means that if Congress does not act the Department of Defense and NDD spending will see automatic, across the board cuts of \$54.7 billion in 2013. If you are wondering how these cuts might affect you, outlined below are examples of specific cuts relate to RDs.

RD Area of Practice	Government Agency/Program	Average % cut in funding
Clinical/Hospital	Medicare, CDC, Cancer, Diabetes	8%
Private Practice	Medicare, Sustainable Growth Rate	2% to RDs being reimbursed for MNT
Public Health	Prevention Fund, FDA, NIH Research, Agriculture Research	8%
Community Care	NIH Research, Congregate Dining, Food Safety, Home Delivered Meals	8%
School/Children	Farm to School, WIC, Food Safety	8%
Food Systems	AFRI, NIFA (Agriculture Research)	8%

To learn more about Sequestration:

- Check out the Issue Brief on the Legislative Tool Kit section at Eatright.org.
- Check out job impact studies at the Coalition for Health Funding's website at http://publichealthfunding.org/index.php/ndd_united1/