



Quality Benefits, Targeted Advocacy & Education for Today's Seniors
1-800-906-ASBA (2722)

Health Reform Remains High Priority, With Uncertain Direction, Following Massachusetts Election

AHIP, Washington Update, 1/22/2010

Congressional leaders and President Obama are emphasizing that they remain strongly committed to passing health reform legislation in the aftermath of the Massachusetts special election that has changed the political environment in Washington.

Senate Republicans increased their clout this week after Scott Brown (R-MA) scored an upset victory over Martha Coakley (D-MA) in a January 19 special election for the Massachusetts Senate seat that Paul Kirk (D-MA) has held since September 2009. After Brown is sworn into office, the Senate's membership will include 57 Democrats, 41 Republicans, and two Independents who caucus with Democrats. This means that Senate Democrats will need support from at least one Republican to secure 60 votes on key procedural motions, with significant implications for the health reform debate and other legislative priorities.

Prior to the Massachusetts special election, lawmakers and Administration officials were in the final stages of negotiating a compromise between the comprehensive health reform bills (H.R. 3962/H.R. 3590) that were approved by the House on November 7 and by the Senate on December 24. These talks were focused on producing a final bill that could move through Congress without any Republican support – a strategy that is no longer viable given the new 59-41 split in the Senate.

Over the past several days, members of Congress have discussed a wide range of strategies for moving forward with health reform, but Democratic leaders and the President have not yet reached a consensus on how they intend to proceed. House and Senate leaders have indicated that they will take time to weigh their options for addressing health reform, but that they also are eager to move on to other issues, including job creation and the economy. The outlook for health reform is expected to clarify by the time President Obama delivers his State of the Union address on Wednesday evening.



Quality Benefits, Targeted Advocacy & Education for Today's Seniors
1-800-906-ASBA (2722)

State of the Union Address and Administration Budget Will Help Shape 2010 Agenda

On Wednesday, January 27, President Obama is scheduled to deliver his State of the Union address before a joint session of Congress. One week later, his Administration will submit its fiscal year 2011 budget proposals to Congress.

In addition to addressing health care reform, the President is expected to strongly emphasize issues surrounding job creation, the economy, and deficit reduction in his remarks before Congress. Financial regulatory reform, energy, and climate change are other priorities he is likely to raise. The President's speech will help shape the legislative agenda for the 2010 session and also is expected to provide clues as to how Democrats will respond to the new political landscape resulting from the special election in Massachusetts.

The Administration's budget, set for release on February 1, will outline the President's priorities for federal programs and agencies, including those within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), for both fiscal year 2011 and the ten-year budget window. In the following weeks, Administration officials will testify in congressional hearings about these budget proposals as Congress works to develop its annual budget resolution.

The American Senior Benefits Association (ASBA) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit association where membership is completely free. ASBA is committed to lifestyle enhancement through benefits, advocacy and education for the over-50 population. ASBA concentrates its efforts on the issues that are of greatest concern to its members. Through its partners and programs, ASBA members receive product and service discounts, as well as other benefits. Current ASBA membership stands at over 500,000 nationally.