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Congress Begins Recess Following House Passage of Budget Resolution

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Earlier today, by a vote of 235 to 193, the House approved a budget resolution, H.Con.Res. 34, that proposes \$5.8 trillion in spending reductions over the next ten years (relative to current law). This was the last major issue on the legislative agenda before Congress recessed this afternoon for a two-week Easter break that is scheduled to run through May 1.

Over the next ten years, the budget resolution calls for \$1.403 trillion in deficit reduction through the repeal and defunding of the Affordable Care Act, \$771 billion in Medicaid budget savings, and \$30 billion in Medicare budget savings. The budget resolution serves as a framework for future legislation and does not provide complete details on every policy issue. As the budget process moves forward, other House and Senate committees will develop legislation containing specific policy changes to reduce federal spending by the amounts specified in the budget resolution.

Action on a Senate budget resolution is awaiting the outcome of negotiations by a bipartisan group of senators – known as the “Gang of Six” – who are working to develop deficit reduction legislation based on the proposals that were considered by the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) said yesterday that he hopes to lay out a plan after the recess based on this group’s efforts, although he acknowledged that the group is “running out of time.” Conrad indicated that “everything is on the table” in these negotiations, including revenues and entitlements, but he declined to provide specific details about what the group is likely to recommend. Other participants in the “Gang of Six” discussions are Assistant Senate Majority Leader Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Sens. Mark Warner (D-VA), Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Tom Coburn (R-OK), and Mike Crapo (R-ID).

Congress Completes Fiscal Year 2011 Appropriations Process

On April 14, both the House and the Senate approved H.R. 1473, the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act” for fiscal year 2011, thereby finalizing the



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appropriations process for the fiscal year that began on October 1, 2010. This legislation was approved by a vote of 260 to 167 in the House and by a vote of 81 to 19 in the Senate.

H.R. 1473 is based on a bipartisan agreement reached late last week by House and Senate leaders and the White House. Overall, this bill achieves an estimated \$38 billion in deficit reduction relative to the CBO baseline for current law spending. The bill includes a number of provisions addressing the Affordable Care Act (ACA), activities within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and other health-related issues. The bill includes provisions that:

- eliminate \$2.2 billion of the \$6 billion in funding that the ACA provided to support the launch of the Consumer Operated and Oriented Plan (CO-OP) program;
- eliminate the ACA's "free choice vouchers" which otherwise would have allowed certain low-income employees, beginning in 2014, to receive vouchers from their employer, in lieu of employer-sponsored coverage, to purchase coverage through a health insurance exchange;
- eliminate \$3.5 billion in performance grants that were authorized under the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA) to provide additional funding to states that increase their enrollment among low-income children above baseline measures; and
- direct the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the CMS Chief Actuary to submit reports to Congress addressing the ACA's impact on premiums, waivers granted by the Administration, and other health reform issues.

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 700,000 nationally.