

## THE CSTE WASHINGTON REPORT

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

... IMPACT OF SANDY ON LIKELY CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACTION

... APPROPRIATIONS OUTLOOK AND SEQUESTRATION UPDATE

... COMMITTEES INVESTIGATE MENINGITIS OUTBREAK

The CSTE Washington Report is provided as an information resource for members of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists on federal legislation and regulation affecting public health and epidemiology in the U.S.

**IMPACT OF SANDY ON LIKELY CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACTION** -- As coastal states in the East struggle to clean up and resume electricity and transportation services after being slammed by Superstorm Sandy, others are calculating the overall costs of the multi-state damage. Insurance estimates ballpark the overall costs at \$10-\$20 billion. Federal budget pundits expect that appropriators in Congress will push for an emergency supplemental appropriation during the lame-duck session to assist the impacted cities and states. Emergency legislation is likely to take precedence over other efforts underway to negotiate a FY 2013 omnibus appropriation bill, and any movement on dealing with the looming sequestration and fiscal cliff. If Republicans behave as they have these past several years, they are likely to call for spending offsets for any emergency spending for Sandy victims.

**APPROPRIATIONS OUTLOOK AND SEQUESTRATION UPDATE** -- As noted above, rumors abound that appropriators are holding quiet negotiation sessions to try and push through a FY 2013 Omnibus Appropriations bill as early as the first week after the election. However, with the likelihood of an emergency supplemental appropriations measure developing to address the damage from Sandy, an omnibus bill will probably get pushed aside. In any case, rumors indicate that negotiations over the Labor-HHS-Education portion of the giant funding bill, the section that funds the CDC, are difficult and not progressing very far. Federal agencies within individual funding bills that do not get wrapped into the Omnibus bill are likely to be subject to a year-long Continuing

Resolution (CR). The federal government is currently operating under a six month CR through March 27, 2013.

Meanwhile, the countdown to the January 2<sup>nd</sup> sequestration deadline continues. If it occurs, this would impose an additional 8.4 percent cut for CDC's budget which is on top of the 12 percent cut to the baseline budget (minus Prevention Fund supplementation) CDC has sustained since FY 2010. The Coalition for Health Funding, which is leading a sequestration protest effort by the entire non-defense discretionary community, held a Hill Day on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. This is in addition to giant sign on letters, Tweet-in Days and other events to highlight the damage indiscriminate cuts to the non-defense side of the budget would inflict. Meetings targeted Members of Congress that are on Defense Committees, and that participate in budget "gangs" and other groups working on solutions to head off the fiscal cliff. The impact on public health agencies and their important activities at all levels of government in communities across the U.S. was stressed. You can review the Coalition's advocacy documents [here](#).

Media commentators and budget wonks are in agreement that sequestration is very unlikely to actually occur. No one wants it to happen and so ways around it are very likely to surface and get adopted at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. Some media sources state President Obama expressed great confidence that a \$4 trillion deficit deal will be made once he is re-elected next week. However, public health advocates are urging supporters not to rely on this or any other such scenario.

**COMMITTEES INVESTIGATE MENINGITIS OUTBREAK** – Both the House Energy and Commerce and the Senate HELP Committees are investigating the multi-state fungal meningitis outbreak that has killed 28 people, according to the latest information on CDC's website. Both Committees have sent letters of inquiry to the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Pharmacy and CDC. The two former agencies inspected the New England Compounding Center (NECC) in 2004 and in 2006 issued a warning letter to the NECC noting numerous violations. CDC has been asked to brief the Members of the Energy and Commerce Committee on the outbreak. Some individual Members of Congress are developing legislation to address perceived regulatory gaps and other problems that resulted in the outbreak.