

THE CSTE WASHINGTON REPORT

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April 26, 2012

Volume 14, Number 5

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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.

ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE APPROVES RECONCILIATION MEASURE ELIMINATING PREVENTION FUND -- On April 25th, the House Energy and Commerce Committee voted 30-22 to eliminate the Affordable Care Act's Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) in order to find savings to avoid sequestration. During the debt ceiling debate last August, legislation was enacted that charged Congress with finding trillions of dollars in cuts over a ten year period, or face an across-the-board cut, beginning in FY 2013, that would affect defense and non-security domestic discretionary programs equally, or nearly so. In an effort to avoid that outcome, the House recently enacted its version of a Budget Resolution (H Con Res 112) that provides reconciliation instructions for budget savings to the various committees. The Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over all public health law, was instructed to find \$3.8 billion in savings in FY 2013, \$28.4 billion in savings over the next five years and \$96.8 billion over the next ten years. In a vote that split on party lines, the Committee approved eliminating all of the Prevention and Public Health Fund, authorized under the Affordable Care Act, for a ten year savings of \$15 billion. Later in the day Majority Leader Boehner (R-OH) also tapped PPHF to offset the cost of keeping student loan costs down. The White House has publicly rejected eliminating the PPHF under the reconciliation process or tapping it to offset student loan costs. The Chairman of the corresponding Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, Sen.

Tom Harkin (D-IA), has also publicly rejected elimination or further cuts to the PPHF. The PPHF has already been cut \$6.25 billion over the next several years to offset a pay increase for physicians under the Medicare program.

APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE -- On April 24th, The House and Senate Appropriations Committees allocated funding amounts, known as 302bs, to each of their respective Subcommittees. For the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittees, which fund all of CDC, the House FY 2013 302b amount is \$150 billion versus the more generous Senate amount of \$157.7 billion. The comparable FY 2012 amount was \$156.3 billion. The Senate is working on producing a bill over the next several weeks and the House is preparing a bill that they expect will be ready by the end of June. However, the House is working with such a low 302b level that it is not expected to be formally filed, as happened last year. Every Democrat on the Subcommittee would be expected to oppose it if offered formally in Subcommittee. The low allocation also makes negotiation with the Senate very difficult for a final bill. As for FY 2012, the current year, CDC officials told a group of partners, attended by CSTE, that grants provided under the Prevention and Public Health Fund have been slowed at the HHS level, but are now working their way through the system and that the allocations and amounts should look like last year.

CSTE LEADERSHIP GOES TO CAPITOL HILL – On March 19th, Members of the CSTE Executive Board, supplemented by select Policy Committee members, made a series of Hill visits to their respective Senators and Representatives. They provided information about how CDC interacts with state health departments, the importance of federal support for CDC and its grant activities, and the importance of state public health epidemiology capacity in protecting and promoting the health of the U.S. population in general and in specific program areas. Executive Committee Officers finished the day at OMB in a meeting with key officials. Concerns expressed about supplanting of CDC's budget authority with less secure Prevention and Public Health Funds were met with the justification that this approach has cushioned CDC's overall budget from suffering much deeper cuts compared with other public health agencies, and other agencies in other areas of the budget.