U.S. Senate Legislation Introduced Addressing Rural Floor Provision

S. 3582: A bill to require continued application of budget neutrality on a national basis in calculation of the Medicare urban hospital wage floor, was introduced this week by Senator Lautenberg (D-NJ) with original co-sponsors Senators Dodd (D-CT), Lieberman (D-CT), and Menendez (D-NJ). The bill, which was referred to the Senate Finance Committee, is a companion bill to H.R. 6966: Safeguarding Our Hospitals’ Future Act of 2008, introduced by Representative John Larson (CT-1) with original co-sponsors Representatives Rosa DeLauro (CT-3), Joe Courtney (CT-2), and Chris Murphy (CT-5).

Click here to view CHA’s Government Relations Update on H.R. 6966 and the background on the budget neutrality issue.

If you have questions, contact Stephen Frayne at (203) 294-7280 or frayne@chime.org.

Congressman Christopher Shays Faces Democratic Challenger Jim Himes in the 4th Congressional District

Christopher Shays is currently serving in his 11th term in the U.S. House of Representatives. Shays, Connecticut’s only Republican member of Congress, serves on the Financial Services Committee, where he is a member of the Capital Markets, Insurance, and Government Sponsored Enterprises and the Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittees, and the Homeland Security Committee, where he is a member of the Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment Subcommittee. In addition, Rep. Shays serves on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, where he is the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs and a member of the Subcommittee on Domestic Policy. Prior to his election to Congress, Shays served as a State Representative for seven terms.

Congressman Shays supported the fight to remove cuts to physician payments under the Deficit Reduction Act. He also supported adding Indirect Medical Education (IME) payments to the Medicare reform bill passed in 2003, which also added a prescription drug plan to Medicare. As a member of the Financial Services Committee, Shays has worked for improvements in housing, community development, the securities and insurance industries, and U.S. capital markets.

Democratic Challenger Jim Himes, a nonprofit executive at Enterprise Community Partners, was born in Lima, Peru and spent the first ten years of his life living in Peru and Colombia while his father worked for the Ford Foundation and UNICEF. Previously, Himes was employed at Goldman Sachs & Company for 12 years, where he rose through the ranks to become Vice President. At Goldman Sachs, Himes worked as a banker in Latin America and headed a telecom technology group during the late 1990s.

Himes was a Commissioner of the Greenwich Housing Authority, serving as chairman for two years. He went on to become an elected member of his town’s finance board, and he has served as Chairman of the Greenwich Democratic Town Committee.

Congressman Christopher Murphy Faces Republican Challenger State Senator David Cappiello in the 5th District

Christopher Murphy is currently serving his first term in the U.S. House of Representatives. Murphy serves on the Financial Services and Oversight and Government Reform Committees. Prior to his election to Congress, Murphy was a State Representative for four years,
followed by four years in the state senate, during which he was Chairman of the Public Health Committee.

Since his election to Congress, Murphy has worked closely with his local hospitals and with the Connecticut hospital community in an attempt to block proposals to cut funding for Medicare and Medicaid and has backed increased funding to the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

In the State House, Murphy was a member of the Prescription Drug Task Force that was instrumental in the passage of legislation to expand ConnPACE, the state’s prescription drug program for low-income seniors. As a State Senator, Murphy worked with hospitals to author legislation that improved hospitals billing and collections practices on uninsured patients. In addition, he authored bills that expanded low-cost prescription drug access for the uninsured, established new government powers to be utilized during a bioterrorism attack, and increased whistleblower protections for hospital employees. Murphy also authored legislation to clarify licensing requirements for outpatient surgical facilities, to create a reasonable adverse advent and infection reporting systems for hospitals, and to help improve patient safety protections.

Republican State Senator David Cappiello is challenging Congressman Murphy, trying to regain the seat formerly held by longtime Republican Congresswoman, Nancy Johnson.

A lifelong resident of Danbury, Senator Cappiello was first elected to the Senate in 1998 and is currently serving his fifth term representing the towns of Danbury, New Fairfield, Bethel, and Sherman. Prior to his election to the Senate, Cappiello served two terms in the General Assembly (1995-1999) and was a member of the Danbury Common Council (1993-1994).

As the ranking Senate Republican on the Appropriations Committee, Cappiello played a role in shaping this year’s budget that invested heavily in healthcare, education, and energy reform. He crafted a tax credit program for businesses to help create jobs in Connecticut.

Cappiello has also played a role in addressing Connecticut’s healthcare crisis. He played a part in the Senate Republicans’ effort to expand ConnPACE, and he worked closely with Danbury Hospital to obtain state approval for the hospital to provide expanded, direct access to cardiac care for the Greater Danbury area. Cappiello also authored a law requiring that all newborns in Connecticut be screened for serious metabolic disorders.

CHA does not endorse candidates running for office. We encourage you, though, to engage with the candidates of your choice and make sure they aware of the vital role hospitals play in the community, as well as the need to fully reimburse hospitals for the cost of healthcare services.

For more information, please visit the following websites:

4th Congressional District
Christopher Shays (R) (incumbent):  
www.shays2008.com
Jim Himes (D):  www.himesforcongress.com

5th Congressional District
Chris Murphy (D) (incumbent):  
www.murphyforcongress.org
David Cappiello (R):  www.davidcappiello.com

Governor Rell Orders Additional Rescissions; Hospital Funding Not Impacted

On September 30, Governor M. Jodi Rell announced a second round of state budget rescissions, totaling approximately $35.4 million. Rell made these additional reductions to address an increasing state budget deficit, now projected by her budget office to be more than $300 million. Hospital funding is not impacted by these reductions.

Governor Rell said in a letter to the chairs and ranking members of the Appropriations and Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committees that the "historic plunge on Wall Street shows there is still a dramatic level of uncertainty in our financial markets - and that we need to act sooner rather than later….and we will continue to be hit hard by that Wall Street turmoil - more so than many other states, since so many Connecticut residents work in the markets and as much as 45 percent of our state income tax depends on what happens there.”

On October 1, State Comptroller Nancy Wyman projected that due to the use of one-time revenues to balance the current budget, the deficit could exceed $800 million. Wyman sent the Governor a letter informing her of the projected deficit, which requires the Rell administration to present a new report of the state’s revenues and scheduled expenditures by mid-November, at a hearing of the legislature’s Appropriations and Finance Committees.

In her press release announcing the rescissions, Governor Rell stated, “The simple fact is that Connecticut state government must
live within its means... we cannot - and will not - spend money we do not have. We cannot - and will not - place burdens on our taxpayers that they are unable to support. And we cannot - and will not - wait until the state budget deficit is so large that it has become truly unmanageable.”

In June, Governor Rell made $150 million in budget reductions.

Hospital-Associated Infections Program a Success

National expert Sandra Burke presents with Brian Fillipo, MD, CHA’s Vice President, Quality and Patient Safety, on 2009 Joint Commissions Standards and National Patient Safety Goals related to hospital-associated infections and new state legislation.

Save the Dates!

Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS) Proposed Rule for 2009 on Wednesday, October 22

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has just published the Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS) Proposed Rule for 2009. CMS addresses such topics as multiple imaging composite Ambulatory Payment Classifications (APC), pharmacy overhead, drug administration, partial hospitalization, proposed visit policies, and physician supervision. In addition, the proposed rule continues to address quality reporting of outpatient services and begins to address non-payment for hospital-acquired conditions.

On Wednesday, October 22, 2008, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (registration and breakfast begins at 8:30 a.m.), CHA will host a program to include a detailed review of key changes in the Medicare program, including Medically Unlikely Edits (MUE), National Drug Codes (NDC), Modifier 25, and others. Each program participant will receive a comprehensive manual that outlines the proposed changes for 2009, an itemized table that shows all the changes for each CPT/HCPCS code between 2008 and 2009, and detailed material and references for the other topics. This program is especially designed for reimbursement, health information management, and regulatory professionals. Robert Masters, a nationally recognized expert in Medicare billing requirements, will be at CHA again this year using his 16 years of experience to simplify the complexities of Medicare coding and billing.

Click here to register. For more information, please contact Sherri Barnhill at (203) 294-7263 or barnhill@chime.org.

2008 Nurse Leadership Forum on Thursday, October 23

CHA’s eighth annual Nurse Leadership Forum will be held on Thursday, October 23, 2008 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (registration and breakfast begins at 8:30 a.m.). The program will feature information-packed sessions led by nationally recognized speakers, in-depth discussion of key issues facing nurse leaders, case studies on models of care and performance improvement, and opportunities to network with colleagues from across the state.

For the full program brochure, click here. To register, click here. For more information, contact Sherri Barnhill at (203) 294-7263 or barnhill@chime.org.