



Capitol Insider



Week of June 27th, 2016

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The Arc's
Public Policy

Disability
Related Bills

Major Recent Events

Health Care/Medicaid - House Speaker Announces Blueprint to Reform Health Care

On June 22, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI) unveiled his [plan](#) to replace the Affordable Care Act and fundamentally restructure the Medicaid and Medicare programs. The proposal is not a detailed legislative draft, but a blueprint for expected action in the next Congress. The proposal provides states the option to choose a block grant for the Medicaid program or a per capita cap. A block grant provides a set amount of federal spending regardless of enrollment. A per capita cap does adjust for enrollment while establishing a limit on how much to reimburse states per enrollee. Either option is a fundamental restructuring of Medicaid financing with the goal of achieving federal savings. If costs are above per enrollee amounts, the states would need to cover the costs or make cuts to provider reimbursement, eligibility, or services, or shift costs to individuals receiving services or their family members. The plan proposes to give states additional flexibility to increase cost sharing, add waiting lists, and limit benefits. Additionally, the plan proposes to add a work requirement to the Medicaid program, end the option to expand Medicaid, and phase out the increased federal match for the states that have already expanded Medicaid. The Arc is very concerned about the impact of these major changes on people with disabilities and their family members and will continue to provide input to Congress about these proposals.

Social Security - 2016 Trustees Report Released; House Holds Hearing

Last week, the Social Security Board of Trustees released "[The 2016 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds](#)." The 2016 report finds that, in 2015, Social Security took in roughly \$23 billion more than it paid out (in total income and interest). Social Security's reserves were \$2.8 trillion at the end of 2015. The Trustees continue to project that Social Security's combined Trust Funds can pay all scheduled benefits through 2034, at which point the Trust Funds would be able to pay approximately 79 percent of scheduled benefits. The Trustees also find that, due to the [Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015](#), the Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) Trust Fund can pay full scheduled benefits through the third quarter of 2023, at which point the DI trust fund will be able to pay about 89 percent of scheduled benefits. This is one year longer than Social Security's actuaries had projected when the Bipartisan Budget Act was enacted.

The Social Security Subcommittee of the House Committee on Ways and Means, held a hearing on the 2016 Trustees Report. The witness was Stephen C. Goss, Chief Actuary, Social Security Administration. Visit the Committee [web site](#) to view testimony and archived video.

Income Support - Senate Holds Hearing on Renewing Communities and Providing Opportunities Through Innovative Solutions to Poverty

Last week, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs held a hearing on “Renewing Communities and Providing Opportunities Through Innovative Solutions to Poverty.” Witnesses were Robert Woodson, Founder and President, Center for Neighborhood Enterprise; Peter L. Ochs, President of Capital II, Inc.; Ron Haskins, Ph.D., Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute; and Olivia Golden, Executive Director, Center for Law and Social Policy. Visit the Committee [web site](#) to review testimony and archived video.

Social Security - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Application Window for Youth Exiting Foster Care Extended

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has [announced](#) that beginning August 1, 2016 youth who are blind or who have disabilities may apply for SSI benefits up to 180 days prior to the end of their eligibility for foster care. The current window for application is 90 days prior to the end of eligibility for foster care, which in most states ends at age 18. This extended application period will be in effect as a one-year pilot. After the one-year trial period, SSA will determine whether to make the policy permanent.

Prevention - House Passes Zika Spending Bill, White House Threatens Veto

After months of hearings, deliberation, and debate, the House passed a [measure](#) to address the Zika outbreak. The \$1.1 billion package includes: \$476 million to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for mosquito control, \$230 million to the National Institutes of Health for vaccine development, \$165 million to the State Department and the US Agency for International Development to respond to outbreaks overseas, and \$86 million for emergency response research through the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority. The package is offset by about \$750 million from unspent Ebola funds and funds for the Affordable Care Act’s health insurance exchanges in U.S. territories, in addition to another \$100 million from the Department of Health and Human Services administrative fund. The measure is strongly opposed by Democrats due to the low funding amount, the offsets, and policy riders on environmental regulations and contraception for women at risk for the Zika virus. The Senate may vote on the package this week, though they appear to not have the 60 votes needed to overcome procedural obstacles. President Obama has already indicated his intent to veto the bill.

NOTE: With Congress on recess for the upcoming July 4 holiday, the next issue of Capitol Insider will be published on July 11. In the meantime, please check the [Capitol Insider blog](#) for updates.