

REMINDER **** REMINDER **** REMINDER ****

December 13, 2005

Dear VOR Friends,

There is still time to influence the budget negotiations debate. If you have not called or faxed your Congressmen, please do so TODAY. Although there are few details emerging regarding conference negotiations, a deal could be struck as early as Thursday. To be heard, make your calls today.

A template letter and template phone message is shared below for your use. Just "copy and paste" or pick up the phone today - it is that easy.

Thank you for all your help. We are in the home stretch now. Your participation is desperately needed.

Thanks! Tamie Hopp

REMINDER -- Budget Reconciliation Action Alert

December 6, 2005

Dear Friends:

Last week you received a VOR Legislative Action Alert. It is shared here again below. If you have not already responded, please act immediately.

As most of you know our families depend on Medicaid to support service for all our handicapped family members. We cannot afford to have these Medicaid cuts. Most of our family members cannot speak for themselves and they depend on us to be their voices so let's do the job. Please call anyone you know that can be of help to us.

Washington must hear from families that this will effect most. They need to hear our voices. Remember, families who are united are strong, but if you do not do the things needed to give your family member a decent quality of life it will not happen. We must always remember that we must be prepared at any time to speak out for them.

They need and depend on us.

So let's not let them down ..ACT IMMEDIATELY . . . DON'T WAIT.

With sincere gratitude,

Louise Underwood, Chair VOR Legislative Committee

SHARE WITH YOUR NETWORK OF FAMILY, FRIENDS AND PEERS IN ADVOCACY.
NUMBERS COUNT! TOGETHER WE WILL PREVAIL!!

Budget Reconciliation Action Alert November 29, 2005

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1. Contact Congress Now!

The Senate has passed its Budget Reconciliation Bill -- \$35 billion in cuts to domestic programs, including \$10 billion to Medicaid over five years. The Senate Bill also includes Money Follows the Person.

The House has passed its Budget Reconciliation Bill -- \$50 billion in cuts to domestic programs, including Medicaid. The House Bill also includes a provision to amend the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waiver (Section 3131) and self-directed personal assistance services (Cash and Counseling) (Section 3132).

The differences between the House and Senate Bills will be negotiated in conference, a process by which all differences are ironed out so that the Senate and House bills are identical. It is expected that these negotiations will commence the week of December 5 and conclude by the week of December 12.

WE MUST ACT QUICKLY.

To identify your two Senators and one Representative, visit <http://www.congress.org>. Through this website you can also get phone and fax numbers.

A template message for your use is below. All you have to do is sign your name, add your contact information and FAX it to your Senators and Representative. In

the alternative, you can call your Senators and Representative. A template phone message is also shared below.

Please act today. We don't have any time to lose. THANK YOU!!

2. Template Phone Message

I am a constituent. My family member has mental retardation and he/she relies heavily on Medicaid-supported services. PLEASE tell House and Senate Conferees to oppose cuts to Medicaid and support amendments to House Sections 3131 and 3132. Both these sections need maintenance of effort and cost of living adjustment requirements to ensure human and fiscal accountability. Section 3131 needs much, much stronger quality assurance provisions.

3. Template Fax Message

December 2005

Re: PROTECT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL RETARDATION STRONGLY OPPOSE SEVERE MEDICAID CUTS; SUPPORT AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE SECTIONS 3131 and 3132.

Dear Senator/Rep. _____:

House and Senate Budget reconciliation conferees and ultimately every Member of Congress have before them proposals to deeply cut Medicaid and other domestic programs. These proposals, if passed, would leave people with mental retardation, including my family member, without access to critical, even life-sustaining services.

PLEASE --

A. STRONGLY OPPOSE Medicaid cuts.

B. AMEND House Reconciliation Section 3131, Expanded access to home and community services for the elderly and disabled.

Section 3131 proposes a major overhaul to the way services are paid for and delivered. This proposal would convert the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver to a Medicaid state plan option, while maintaining the state flexibility provisions inherent in a waiver. This waiver without a waiver would give States unfettered discretion to limit services, restrict eligibility and reduce funding - federal money with virtually no federal oversight. It would be a dangerous precedent for people with great needs and few resources.

In addition to strengthening the quality assurance provisions, Section 3131 should be amended to include a maintenance of effort requirement for people already in the program and a provision for annual cost of annual living adjustments (COLAs) for all in the program.

Section 3131 risks the health and welfare of beneficiaries. It would be an historically irresponsible use of federal dollars. Until Section 3131 is amended to include effective human and fiscal accountability, House Reconciliation Section 3131 must not pass.

C. AMEND House Reconciliation Section 3132, Optional choice of self-directed personal assistance services (cash and counseling).

The elderly and people with disabilities who would benefit from the proposed cash and counseling program are capable of overseeing the quality of services received. Section 3132, however, must be enhanced to better ensure that funds appropriated to beneficiaries are adequate to accommodate their needs over time. Like Section 3131, Section 3132 must be amended to include maintenance of effort and COLA requirements. Section 3132 also lacks opportunities for beneficiaries to have service plan adjustments through the service year to reflect changing needs — changes that for some individuals with disabilities are inevitable and for others, while unexpected, can be life-threatening.

If you are a Conferee, please strongly support VORÆs position on Medicaid and House Sections 3131 and 3132, in conference negotiations. If you are a Conferee, please help by communicating VORÆs positions to your colleagues on the Conference Committee.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and compassionate leadership on behalf of people with mental retardation.

Sincerely,

Name, Address, Phone, Fax, E-Mail

4. Congressional Contact Information

To identify your two Senators and one Representative, visit <http://www.congress.org>. The Capitol Switchboard can also identify for your Senators and Representative, and connect you to their offices: 1-800-426-8073.

Your Senators and Representative can be reached using a special "Save Medicaid" toll-free number: 1-800-828-0498.

At <http://www.congress.org>, you can also direct phone and fax numbers.

5. Key Contacts

It is important that we reach EVERY Member of Congress.

First, contact Senators and Congressmen from your own state. Second, enlist families, friends, and peers in advocacy to do the same. Third, send your message to the list of key contacts below.

Together, we must reach EVERY member of Congress.

Senate Finance Committee:

<http://www.senate.gov/~finance/sitepages/committee.htm>, especially û

Charles Grassley, Chair (R-IA) Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT) Trent Lott (R-MS) Olympia Snowe (R-ME) Max Baucus, Ranking (D-MT) John D. Rockefeller IV (D-WV) Kent Conrad (D-ND)

House Energy and Commerce Committee:

<http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/members/members.htm>, especially û

Joe Barton, Chair (R-TX) Ralph Hall (R-TX) Michael Bilirakis, Vice Chair (R-FL) Fred Upton (R-MI) Cliff Stearns (R-FL) Paul Gillmor (R-OH) Nathan Deal (R-GA) John Dingell, Ranking (D-MI) Henry Waxman (D-CA) Edward Markey (D-MA) Rick Boucher (D-VA)

WE MUST ACT QUICKLY. SEND YOUR FAX OR MAKE YOUR CALLS TODAY!!