

Senate-Passed Mental Health Parity Moves to Conference, Aggressive Grassroots Campaign Needed to Win Enactment

The campaign for mental health parity moves to a more challenging arena after Senate approval Oct. 30 of S. 543, the Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act, as an amendment to the FY 2002 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill (H.R. 3061). A conference committee of House and Senate appropriators charged with resolving the differences in the two bodies' Labor-HHS-Education funding bills will provide the forum for deliberations on mental health parity.

The success of Senators Domenici and Wellstone in attaching parity to an appropriations bill now brings additional players into deciding the fate of mental health parity. In the face of likely House opposition to expanding parity beyond the partial protections in the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996, grassroots efforts will be critical to success.

Action: By COB on Wednesday, November 14, constituents of targeted House members are able to utilize a toll-free parity "legislative hotline" at 1-866-PARITY4 (1-866-727-4894) to reach the Capitol Switchboard and ask for their Representative's office by name or caller's home ZIP code. When connected, ask for the health legislative assistant and deliver the message below. The conference may end as soon as November 16! The National Council thanks the mental and behavioral health organizations that are covering the cost of this toll-free number.

Targets:

- Members of the House Appropriations Committee to urge them to accept the Senate parity amendment.
- The chairman and ranking Democratic member of these House committees (full committee and relevant subcommittees): Education and Workforce, Energy and Commerce, and Ways and Means to urge them to work with Appropriations conferees to accept the Senate parity amendment.

H.R. 162, the House parity bill (which includes addictions treatment) was introduced by Rep. Roukema (R-NJ) and has 179 co-sponsors, 24 of whom are Republicans. Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee members will be the conferees, but other House members will also play important behind-the-scenes roles in deliberations on mental health parity. Three different committees of the House have jurisdiction over elements of mental health parity legislation. They are the Committee on Education and the Workforce, the Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Committee on Ways and Means. Those authorization committees are likely to be consulted as to their views on parity. The effort to legislate on an appropriations bill is unorthodox (though hardly unprecedented), but it is important to note that none of the three committees acted on the House parity bill, H.R. 162.

Targets:

- Alabama: Callahan (R); Aderholt (R); Cramer (D) Cosponsor
- Arizona: Kolbe (R) Cosponsor; Pastor (D) Cosponsor
- California: Cunningham (R); Farr (D) Cosponsor; Doolittle (R); Lewis (R); Pelosi (D) Cosponsor; Roybal-Allard (D) Cosponsor. Miller (D) Thomas (R) Stark (D)
- Connecticut: DeLauro (D) Cosponsor
- Florida: Bill Young (R) Approp Cmte Chairman; Dan Miller (R); Boyd (D); Meek (D)
- Georgia: Kingston (R)
- Illinois: Jackson (D) Cosponsor; LaHood (R)
- Indiana: Visclosky (D) Cosponsor

- Iowa: Latham (R) Kansas: Tiahrt (R)
- Kentucky: Northup (R); Rogers (R)
- Louisiana: Vitter (R). Tauzin (R)
- Maryland: Hoyer (D) Cosponsor
- Massachusetts: Olver (D) Cosponsor
- Michigan: Knollenberg (R); Kilpatrick (D) Cosponsor. Dingell (D)
- Minnesota: Sabo (D)
- Mississippi: Roger Wicker (R)
- Missouri: Emerson (R)
- New Hampshire: Sununu (R)
- New Jersey: Frelinghuysen (R) Cosponsor; Rothman (D). Andrews (D)
- New Mexico: Skeen (R)
- New York: Lowey (D) Cosponsor; Hinchey (D) Cosponsor; Serrano (D) Cosponsor; Sweeney (R); Walsh (R) Cosponsor. Rangel (D)
- North Carolina: Price (D) Cosponsor; Taylor (R)
- Ohio: Regula (R) Hobson (R); Kaptur (D) Boehner (R) S. Brown (D) Cosponsor Oklahoma: Istook (R)
- Pennsylvania: Peterson (R); Sherwood (R); Fattah (D); Murtha (D);
- Rhode Island: P. Kennedy (D) Cosponsor
- South Carolina: Clyburn (D) Cosponsor
- Tennessee: Wamp (R)
- Texas: Granger (R); Bonilla (R) Cosponsor; DeLay (R); Edwards (D)
- Virginia: Goode (I); Moran (D) Cosponsor; Wolf (R)
- Washington: Dicks (D); Nethercutt (R)
- West Virginia: Mollohan (D) Cosponsor
- Wisconsin: Obey (D)