**OSR Legislative Affairs Update October 21, 2011**

**1.  Massachusetts Looks to Reign in Its Health Costs**

As former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and the GOP candidates continue to debate and move toward the preliminary election season, the health care debate continues to circle around mandatory coverage provided in a law he signed in 2006.  State legislators are currently devising a plan that would encourage flat “global payments” to networks of providers for keeping patients well, replacing the current fee-for-service system.  While largely succeeding at providing universal coverage, the per capita spending on health care in Massachusetts outpaces the national average by 15%. ([New York Times](https://owa.med.wayne.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=f012be4015814eaa9ba86f2df468afd7&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.nytimes.com%2f2011%2f10%2f18%2fus%2fmassachusetts-tries-to-rein-in-its-health-care-cost.html%3fref%3dpolicy" \o "" \t "_blank))

**2.  CLASS Act Scrapped**

The Obama administration scrapped part of the new healthcare law after it was found to be financially unsustainable by HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.  The CLASS program (Community Living Assistance Services and Supports), supported by the late Senator Edward Kennedy, was intended to help people with severe disabilities who wanted to live in the community to help pay for nursing home care or assisted living.  Premiums to finance the program would be so high that few healthy people would sign up, thus making the program insolvent. ([New York Times](https://owa.med.wayne.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=f012be4015814eaa9ba86f2df468afd7&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.nytimes.com%2f2011%2f10%2f15%2fhealth%2fpolicy%2f15health.html%3fscp%3d5%26sq%3dhealth%2520care%26st%3dcse" \o "" \t "_blank))

**3.  AAMC joins others to oppose Medicaid Cuts**The AAMC joined multiple other organizations and advocacy groups including the American Hospital Association (AHA), the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (NAPH), and the National Association of Children’s Hospitals (NACH) by recommending the committee oppose any Medicaid cuts that would undermine the health safety net.  The letter states that “further cuts, instigated at the federal level, would not only harm patients’ access to care, but would hurt local economies.” ([Washington Highlights](https://owa.med.wayne.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=f012be4015814eaa9ba86f2df468afd7&URL=https%3a%2f%2fwww.aamc.org%2fadvocacy%2fwashhigh%2f" \o "" \t "_blank))

**4.  CMS Works to Eliminate Unnecessary Regulations**CMS Administrator Don Berwick said the agency is eliminating several specific requirements, such as a rule requiring multiple hospitals in the same system to have their own governing boards. By letting hospitals set their own management structures, he said, CMS will help them free up money for other priorities.  ([The Hill](https://owa.med.wayne.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=f012be4015814eaa9ba86f2df468afd7&URL=http%3a%2f%2fthehill.com%2fblogs%2fhealthwatch%2fother%2f188205-cms-axes-healthcare-regulations-says-hospitals-will-save-1b" \o "" \t "_blank))

**5.  The Recession and the Uninsured**Between 2007 and 2010, the recession caused many with previously stable coverage to become uninsured.  An analysis by the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured finds that although the uninsured population remains disproportionately made up of younger people, the poor and racial/ethnic minorities, uninsurance rose the fastest among the near-elderly, whites and those with higher incomes. With unemployment expected to remain high for the foreseeable future, high rates of uninsurance are likely to continue - and perhaps increase - until the full implementation of the health reform in 2014 provides new affordable avenues for coverage.  ([Kaiser](https://owa.med.wayne.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=f012be4015814eaa9ba86f2df468afd7&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.kff.org%2funinsured%2f8246.cfm" \o "" \t "_blank))

**6.  Debate on Abortion Returns to the House**The House approved an anti-abortion bill called the “Protect Life Act,” which would ban women from using the health reform law’s tax subsidies to purchase health plans that cover abortions and would allow hospital and health care providers to refuse to provide abortions if they have objections on grounds of conscience.  ([Politico](https://owa.med.wayne.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=f012be4015814eaa9ba86f2df468afd7&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.politico.com%2fnews%2fstories%2f1011%2f65932.html" \o "" \t "_blank))

Your loyal Legislative Affairs team,
Stephen Carr - Northeast Region
Tom Selby - Central Region
Arun Iyer - Southern Region
Damian Illing - Western Region