**OSR Legislative Affairs Update:  March 19, 2012**

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6. Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB) Repeal Bill Moving Forward

Congress is expected to address legislation to repeal the IPAB – the commission created by the Affordable Care Act to make potentially binding recommendations regarding Medicare spending.  The bill was passed by two House subcommittees last week (Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means).  A vote by the full House is scheduled for March 19.  The AMA supports the repeal bill, saying “[IPAB] would only add to the problems caused by the broken Medicare physician payment formula.”  The CBO estimates the repeal of the IPAB would add $3.1 billion to the deficit over the next 10 years.  In light of the CBO estimate, the repeal bill is expected to be paired with the HEALTH Act, which incorporates significant medical liability reform legislation, including a $250,000 cap on non-economic damages.  [AMA Wire](http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/amawire/2012-march-14/2012-march-14-general_news1.shtml%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).  [NEJM Perspective Briefs](http://www.nejm.org/health-policy-and-reform%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

1. Surgeon General Releases New Report on Tobacco Prevention Efforts

In the 31st tobacco-related Surgeon General’s report issued since 1964, several issues surrounding the epidemic use of tobacco among youth and young adults were addressed.  The report and fact sheet include details regarding the epidemiology, causes, health effects, and interventions for tobacco use.  The report concludes by suggesting implementation of comprehensive, sustained, multi-component programs with a goal of cutting youth tobacco use in half in six years.  The report emphasizes prevention and tobacco control programs, with funding sustained at levels recommended by the CDC.  [Surgeon General Fact Sheet](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/preventing-youth-tobacco-use/factsheet.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). [Full Report](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/preventing-youth-tobacco-use/full-report.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

1. Match Day Renews Concerns about Doctor Shortages

Following the release of Match Day results by the National Residency Matching Program, AAMC President and CEO Dr. Darrel G. Kirch issued a statement addressing residency training positions.  The statement notes a slight increase in the number of residency training positions in this year’s match, and an all-time high total number of U.S. medical school graduates who matched into a residency training position (16,272 M.D.’s).  However, the AAMC remains concerned that the increases are not enough to meet the country’s future health care needs.  The statement calls for a greater national investment in residency training and for the development of more efficient and effective ways for health professionals to deliver high-quality care to all patients.   The statement concludes by saying, “The AAMC urges Congress and the administration to do their part and increase funding for Medicare-supported residency positions.  Cutting the deficit is important, but sustained investment in doctor training is critical to the health of all Americans.”  [AAMC](https://www.aamc.org/newsroom/newsreleases/276936/120316.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

1. Overview of State Efforts to Establish Health Insurance Exchanges

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation has set up a brief overview of each states’ progress towards setting up health insurance exchanges.  Millions of Americans are expected to utilize the exchanges to purchase health insurance coverage under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.  The exchanges are expected to enable consumers to find the best plan for their needs and budget.  The exchanges are required to be fully operational in every state by January 1, 2014.  Check your state’s profile [here](http://healthreform.kff.org/State-Exchange-Profiles-Page.aspx%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).  See the summary report at the [Kaiser Family Foundation website](http://www.kff.org/healthreform/8213.cfm%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

1. Student Loan Reforms Introduced in House Bill

The Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012 (Rep. Hansen Clarke D-Mich) was introduced this month.  The bill is intended to help student loan borrowers who have been struggling financially by creating a 10/10 Loan Repayment Plan and a 10/10 Loan Forgiveness Program.  Under the new plans, monthly repayments are capped at 10% of discretionary income, and up to $42,520 would be forgiven after 10 years of repayment (120 payments).  By cutting student loan debt, Rep. Clarke hopes the borrower will use their income to invest on their own and create new jobs.  The bill also includes a 3.4% interest rate cap on Direct Stafford loans.  Other details of the bill can be found at the [AAMC website](https://www.aamc.org/advocacy/washhigh/highlights2012/276934/031612studentloanreformsintroducedinhousebillwithoffset.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) or [OpenCongress.org](http://www.opencongress.org/bill/112-h4170/show%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

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