

National Legislative Update on Pending Bills Related to Aging

S. 1257 – Project 2020: Building on the Promise of Home and Community-Based Care, introduced by Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) on June 12, 2009; referred to the Senate Finance Committee. The bill is designed to shift funds away from expensive nursing home care, by granting more funds for home and community-based care services. The measure also calls for the increased use of evidence-based disease prevention, and health promotion programs. The legislation is expected to save Medicare and Medicaid over \$1.1 billion over 10 years by reducing the need for more expensive institutional care. Similar legislation has been introduced by Rep. Bruce Braley (D-IA) and John Sarbanes (D-MD), H.R. 2852. For more information, visit www.thomas.gov

S. 245—Retooling the Healthcare Workforce for an Aging America, introduced by Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) on January 15, 2009; referred to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. The legislation was designed to expand education and training opportunities in geriatrics and long-term care for licensed health professionals, direct care workers and family caregivers in order to meet the needs of the growing older adult population. The bill permits state Medicaid programs to do an assessment of family caregivers' needs and to provide referral to the appropriate services when he or she is caring for a Medicaid beneficiary who qualifies for home and community-based services. Companion legislation was introduced in the House by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), H.R. 468 www.thomas.gov

H.R. 519 – Elder Caregiver Support and Information Enhancement Act of 2009, introduced by Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY) on January 19, 2009; referred to the Committees on Education & Labor, and Energy & Commerce. The measure would authorize \$250 million in funding for the National Family Caregiver Support Programs for fiscal years 2009-2012. In addition, the legislation would authorize \$10 million for the National Clearinghouse on Long-Term Care Information for FYs 2009-2012. For more information, visit, www.thomas.gov

S. 750—Caring for an Aging America, introduced by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) on March 31, 2009; referred to the Senate Finance Committee and Senate HELP Committee. The measure is designed to address the shortage of workers trained in caring for and working with older Americans by strengthening the recruitment and retention of geriatric health professionals, such as physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, and other geriatric care workers. The bill would also provide these professionals with loan forgiveness, career advancement opportunities for working in the field of geriatrics. The bill also establishes a Health and Long-Term Care Workforce Advisory Panel for an Aging America. For more information, visit, www.thomas.gov

H.R. 769 -- Social Security Caregiver Credit Act, introduced by Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY) on January 28, 2009; referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means. Like

last year's bill, the legislation would allow unpaid family caregivers to claim Social Security benefits as if they had worked for a wage (according to a specified formula) during each month they were engaged for at least 80 hours in providing care to a dependent relative, for up to five years of such service. www.thomas.gov

H.R. 1192 – Alzheimer's Family Assistance Act, introduced by Rep. Bernice Johnson (D-TX) on February 25, 2009; referred to the House Ways & Means Committee. The legislation provides an income tax credit, starting at \$2,000 in 2009 and increasing each year until it reaches \$3,500 in 2012 for family caregivers. The bill also includes a tax deduction for long-term care insurance premiums and requires additional consumer protections for LTC insurance policyholders. www.thomas.gov

S. 1131 – The Independence At Home Act, introduced by Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) on May 21, 2009; referred to the Senate Finance Committee. The measure is designed to provide a coordinated team-based approach to primary care for the chronically ill Medicare beneficiaries in their own home. The bill creates incentives for providers to develop better and lower cost health care for the highest cost beneficiaries – those with multiple chronic care illnesses. The bill would create a pilot program to provide in-home care starting off with a comprehensive health care assessment and needs assessment. The assessment will serve as a plan of care that is directed by the physician, nurse-practitioner, or physician's assistant in collaboration with the patient and the patient's family caregiver. Medication management and electronic medical records and the use of health information technology must be employed as part of the plan to reduce medical errors, improve patient care, and reduce costs. www.thomas.gov

S. 434 – Empowered At Home Act, introduced by Senator John Kerry (D-MA) on February 13, 2009; referred to the Senate Finance Committee. The bill ensures that Medicaid spousal impoverishment protections available for couples in nursing homes are also made available to those who choose home and community-based services (HCBS). The bill also removes barriers and makes it easier for states to offer HCBS for Medicaid demonstration grants for evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention programs. The legislation also provides a \$3,000 tax credit for caregivers caring for dependent family members. www.thomas.gov

H.R. 824 – Family and Medical Leave Enhancement Act of 2009, introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) on February 3, 2009; referred to the House Education & Labor Committee and Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The legislation would broaden the protections of the Family and Medical Leave Act to allow employees in companies with more than 25 employees to take family and medical leave. Current law applies only to companies with 50 or more employees. The legislation would also provide up to 24 hours per year of unpaid Parental Involvement and Family Wellness leave, which would allow parents and grandparents to attend parent-teacher conferences, attend school activities, or take children, grandchildren, or parents to doctor appointments.