



Advocacy Council



CALL TO ACTION! August 29th, 2011

AAOE Members:

As most of you know, Congress is in recess and many of you are planning visits with your House Representative and/or Senator. Your AAOE Advocacy Council thought you might like a summary of key issues as well some tips on how to go about a meeting with your legislator.

NOW IS THE TIME TO CONTACT YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS!

If a member of our council can help you in anyway, please feel free to contact any of us and we'll certainly try to answer any questions you might have. We are also interested in how your meetings go. We'd love to hear from you about your experiences. (Contact information at the end of this newsletter)

Below is a legislative update we hope you will find useful. It's from Jamie Gregorian, our legislative contact at AAOS. He is talking about where things stand in DC as of the summer recess.

After a grueling battle over the country's finances concluded, Congress went into recess and will remain in their states and districts until September 7th. What follows is a recap of what happened in the frenetic final days leading up to the recess, and what we expect to see when they return to town.

The Debt Ceiling

On July 31st, President Obama and congressional leaders [reached a deal](#) to raise the federal debt limit that included sharp spending cuts and no new taxes, breaking a partisan impasse that could have brought about the country's first ever default on its debt obligations.

[The agreement](#) provides about \$900 billion in spending cuts that allows increases in the debt ceiling of \$400 billion and one of \$500 billion, each subject to a resolution of disapproval by Congress. The bill further requires that a special Congressional committee equally divided between Democrats and Republicans recommend another \$1.5 trillion in cuts. Those recommendations would be fast tracked and could not be filibustered or amended. If the panel deadlocks, and if both chambers fail to approve a balanced budget amendment in the wake of that deadlock, an across-the-board round of spending cuts would be required.

The House of Representatives [approved the proposal](#) on August 1st, by a margin of 269-161. The bill had bipartisan support, but 66 Republicans and 95 Democrats voted against the legislation. Some conservative Republicans resisted any raise in the debt ceiling, leading them to vote against the bill, while some liberal Democrats wanted to see greater protection of entitlement programs, an extension of unemployment benefits, and an end to tax breaks for wealthy taxpayers. In the end, the centrist-leaning members of each party provided a comfortable cushion for the bill to pass. In the Senate, the bill sailed through on a 74-26 vote. Voting "yes" were 28 Senate Republicans and 46 Senate Democrats. Voting "no" were 19 Republicans and seven Democrats.

What Does the Deal Mean for Doctors?

As noted above, the special Congressional committee that was created by this debt deal must find an additional \$1.5 trillion in cuts. However, if Congress does not come up with such a plan by the end of the year, the bill requires the federal government to impose a [2% across-the-board](#) reduction in payments to Medicare providers starting in 2013. Also, Medicare reimbursements [could drop](#) by nearly 30 percent on January 1, if Congress does not repeal the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula.

The cuts being contemplated by the commission [could include](#) cuts to Medigap insurance, which would limit supplemental insurance plans for the elderly, and the implementation of a policy requiring high-earning seniors to pay higher premiums for their plans. There is the potential for a tickle-down effect on doctors from their patients' subsidies—and thus, ability to pay—being cut.

In-District Efforts

While Congress is in recess, it is a great opportunity for constituents to meet with their elected officials. If you or any of your organization's members would like to speak with their member(s) of Congress about antitrust issues, the sustainable growth rate, the Independent Payment Advisory Board, imaging, or medical liability reform, we have a toolkit for each issue here in the DC office and would be happy to furnish the information to you.

When Congress Comes Back

When Congress returns, they will face a [slate of appropriations bills](#) (including the defense bill, and the Labor-HHS-Education bill, both of which contain significant Orthopaedic research dollars) that will run out of funding on September 30th, thereby necessitating either a continuing resolution of the existing budgets or new bills get passed before the end of the month. One can reasonably expect some contention over the appropriations bills, as they involve spending and allocation of increasingly scarce federal dollars.

That's all right now from Washington. As always, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best,
Jamie
Senior Manager, Specialty Society Affairs & Research Advocacy
Office of Government Relations
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons

Given this information, we encourage you to contact your Congressman and Senators.

If you are unsure about how to contact your Congressman or Senators, AAOE is providing the links below for your information only.

Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/index.htm>
(Find your Senator is in the top right corner)

House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/>
(Find your Congressman by entering your Zip Code.)

RESOURCE: Tips for Effective Legislative Contacts—go to www.aaoe.net/Advocacy

Advocacy Council:

Mona Reimers
Chair
P: (260)484-8551
E: mreimers@orthone.com

Michael A. Berkowitz
Member-at-Large
P: (281)440-6960
E: mab@ksfortho.com

Michael Butler
Member-at-Large
P: (404)350-4710
E: mbutler@pocatlanta.com

Chris Dugger
Member-at-Large
P: (413)233-1101
E: chris.dugger@neortho.com

Beverly J. Gazmen
Member-at-Large
P: (410)768-5555
E: gazmen@earthlink.net

Dorothy Hellums
Member-at-Large
P: (575)622-7600
E: dorothyh@scorpc.com

Debra L. Mitchell
Member-at-Large
P: (727)568-6840
E: dlmitchell@chortho.com

Ronald P. O'Neal
Member-at-Large
P: (334)274-9116
E: roneal@aosonline.net

Jana Ray
Member-at-Large
P: (907)745-2663
E: jana@denaliorthopedics.com

Martin Shipman
Member-at-Large
P: (850)219-1964
E: martin.shipman@tlhoc.com

David Schlactus
AAOE Board Liaison
P: (503)540-6375
E: David.Schlactus@HopeOrthopedics.com

Addy M. Kujawa
Executive Director
American Association of Orthopaedic Executives
P: 847-384-4249
E: kujawa@aaoe.net