

Health Reform Rundown:

Both the House and Senate were in recess through the month of August, capping off a frenzied summer of activity on health reform. The initial stated goal of Congressional leaders to pass health reform legislation prior to adjourning for the August recess has given way to a slower pace on health reform efforts that will likely stretch into Fall.

As both chambers of Congress prepare to reconvene and resume work on health reform, now is an opportune time to offer an overview of what has transpired on health reform to-date and offer some perspective on how current proposals impact oral health and the profession of dental hygiene, specifically.

In the House of Representatives, there are three committees with jurisdiction over health reform: the House Committees on Education and Labor, Ways and Means, and Energy and Commerce. The Committees came together earlier this summer to draft HR 3200, America’s Affordable Health Choices Act. The House Committees opted to draft one health reform bill, HR 3200, which was amended/”marked-up” separately by each Committee. By July 31, each of the Committees had completed its mark-up of HR 3200. Once the House reconvenes, leadership from each of the Committees will meet to reconcile the differences between the three Committee versions of HR 3200 before the bill can be forwarded to the House floor for consideration and a vote.

The following chart highlights House activity to date:

	House Education & Labor Committee	House Ways and Means Committee	House Energy & Commerce Committee
Framework Proposal/Walk-through	X	X	X
Tri- Committee Draft Bill (HR 3200)	X	X	X
Committee Mark-up	X	X	X
Committee Passage	X	X	X
Committee Conference/Reconciliation			
House Vote			
House/Senate Bill Conference/Reconciliation			

In the Senate, there are two Committees with jurisdiction over health reform—the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the Finance Committee. By the close of June the Senate HELP Committee had released, marked-up, and passed its health reform bill, The Affordable Health Choices Act (no bill number yet assigned).

The Senate Finance Committee has not yet released a draft health reform proposal or bill, but is expected to make public a proposal once the Senate reconvenes in September. The financing of health reform is a huge consideration in the overall success of any proposed legislation, so the Senate Finance Committee has taken a very deliberate approach to the development of language. To-date, only a “walk-through,” or an informal framework for the Senate Finance Committee’s legislation has been made public and it has been difficult to glean the role oral health would play in a Senate Finance bill.

The following represents progress on efforts in the Senate to-date:

	Senate HELP Committee	Senate Finance Committee
Framework Proposal/Walk-through	X	X
Draft Bill	X	
Committee Mark-up	X	
Committee Passage	X	
Committee Conference/Reconciliation		
Senate Vote		
Senate/House Bill Conference/Reconciliation		

This chart highlights some of the key dental provisions included in the bills introduced to-date:

<u>Senate HELP Bill</u>	<u>House Tri-Committee Bill (H.R. 3200)</u>
- Coverage for oral health services, particularly preventive services, for specific vulnerable populations, notably children	- No explicit inclusion of oral health benefits, but bill delegates take of determining essential benefits and recommendations on what benefits plans offer to a Health Benefits Advisory Committee that would be established [Section 122]
- Five year national, public education campaign focused on oral health care prevention and education [Section 399GG]	- Coverage for adult oral health services as part of “premium” benefit plans offered (one of several tiered plan options that would be available) under program; would involve cost-sharing for enrollees [Section 203]
- Demonstration grants to entities that demonstrate the effectiveness of research-based dental caries and disease management activities [Section 399GG-1]	- Grants for institutions, hospitals, and other entities carrying out training in general dentistry, pediatric dentistry, or public health dentistry (including for dental hygienists) [Section 2215]
- Grants to states for school-based sealant programs, oral health infrastructure, and improved oral health surveillance activities [Section 314]	- Financial assistance/loan repayment for dental students, residents, practicing dentists, and dental hygiene students who are participants in training program and plan to work in general, pediatric, public health dentistry, or dental hygiene; funding for faculty teaching in such programs also included [Section 2215]
- Grants for institutions, hospitals, and other entities carrying out training in general dentistry, pediatric dentistry, or public health dentistry (including for dental hygienists) [Section 433]	
- Financial assistance/loan repayment for	

dental students, residents, practicing dentists, and dental hygiene students who are participants in training program and plan to work in general, pediatric, public health dentistry, or dental hygiene; funding for faculty teaching in such programs also included [Section 433]

- Grants supporting 15 entities in the establishment of a demonstration program to train or employ alternative dental health care providers, including advanced practice dental hygienists, independent dental hygienists, dental therapists, community dental health coordinators, physicians, and others [Section 434]

For additional synopsis/comparisons of health reform proposals and bills, visit the Kaiser Family Foundation website: <http://www.kff.org/healthreform/sidebyside.cfm>. The organization has developed a tool for users to compare the various incarnations of health reform proposals. (About Kaiser Family Foundation: <http://www.kff.org/about/index2.cfm>)

At this time, it is unclear what form any final health reform legislation will take. What is clear is that much remains to be done on the issue. ADHA will remain engaged to represent the dental hygiene profession in dialogue and activity related to health reform. For additional information, please feel free to contact ADHA's Governmental Affairs Division at 312.440.8925 or gov.affairs@adha.net.

Additional Links/Information Resources on Health Reform:

House Energy and Commerce Committee: <http://energycommerce.house.gov/>

House Ways and Means Committee: <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/>

House Education and Labor Committee: <http://edlabor.house.gov/>

Senate HELP Committee: <http://help.senate.gov/>

Senate Finance Committee: <http://finance.senate.gov/>

The White House Health Reform Website: <http://www.healthreform.gov/>