



The Capitol Circuit

August 2019

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National Advocacy

Congress Raises Spending Caps Before Departing for August Recess

August Recess has officially begun, meaning that Congress has left Washington, D.C. and members are headed back to their home state or district until September. Epilepsy Foundation local offices and advocates are working on scheduling meetings with members of Congress during recess to increase awareness and support for important policy issues.

Prior to leaving, Congress passed a two-year bipartisan budget package, H.R. 3877. The deal includes a \$2.7 trillion budget agreement that raises military and non-military federal spending caps and prevents \$126 billion in automatic spending cuts – otherwise known as sequestration. The deal also suspends the debt ceiling through July 2021. The President signed the deal on August 2nd. Upon returning from August Recess in September, the U.S. House and Senate will still need to pass multiple fiscal year 2020 funding bills, but the recently signed budget agreement will pave the way for vital funding for agencies, such as those that support epilepsy research and programs like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Epilepsy Foundation Joins National Patient and Consumer Groups Opposing Changes That Would Weaken Health Care Anti-Discrimination Rules

In June 2019, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released proposed changes to Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Section 1557 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, and disability in health care programs and activities operated or funded by the federal government. The proposed rule would undermine critical patient protections guaranteed by the ACA by significantly weakening the regulations implementing Section 1557, including eliminating protections against discriminatory benefit design. Therefore, the likelihood of insurers discriminating against individuals with serious and chronic conditions by refusing to cover treatments and services will increase. On August 13th, the Foundation, along with hundreds of national patient, disability, and consumer groups, urged the Administration to withdraw the proposed rule. Read the comments below.

[I Am Essential Coalition Comment](#)

[Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Coalition Comment](#)

[National Patient Groups Comment](#)

[Update on Congressional Efforts to Address Drug Pricing](#)

High drug prices, rising out-of-pocket costs, and access to health care are top of mind for millions of Americans. In response, Congress has continued to put forth various pieces of legislation aimed at addressing these issues. At the end of July, the Senate Finance Committee marked up – and narrowly approved – a package intended to reduce prescription drug prices by capping out-of-pocket costs in Medicare Part D, as well as making changes to prescription drug coverage under Medicare Part B and Medicaid. Additionally, the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Committee on Ways and Means have both moved legislation aimed at pushing generics to market and increasing transparency. House Leadership is expected to release a package this fall also aimed at lowering prescription drug costs.

The Foundation supports a cap on out of pocket costs in Medicare Part D and is still examining the rest of the Finance Committee package. The Foundation will weigh the merits of the proposed bills against its [recently released updated principles and positions on access to prescription medication](#).

Learn more about access to prescription medications at advocacy.epilepsy.com/medication-access.



We encourage you to invite others to join our **Speak Up, Speak Out!** advocacy network. Members receive the monthly *Capitol Circuit* newsletter and alerts about opportunities to advocate for the epilepsy community throughout the year. Growing our advocacy network is critical to achieving our public policy goals as we move through busy state and federal legislative sessions. Make a difference today by sharing our Speak Up, Speak Out! Network on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

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