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In this Issue:

National Advocacy

- Congress Secures Another Deal to Briefly Extend Funding Deadline
- CMS Finalizes Changes to Long-term Video EEG Codes
- Foundation Hosts Briefing on Capitol Hill on Seizure First Aid and Priorities for the Epilepsy Community
- Open Enrollment for Medicare and the Marketplace

State Advocacy

- Epilepsy Awareness Proclamations Across the States
- New Jersey’s Seizure Safe Schools Legislation Passes Out of Committee
- Watch the Recording of the Advocating for Seizure Safe Schools Webinar

National Advocacy

Congress Secures Another Deal to Briefly Extend Funding Deadline

The House of Representatives and the Senate have not yet been able to come to an agreement on dozens of spending bills to fund the government through Fiscal Year 2020. With the deadline of November 21st looming, the House passed another continuing resolution (H.R. 3055) on Tuesday, November 19, extending the deadline another 4 weeks - through December 20 - to grant additional time for negotiation. The Senate is expected to quickly pass the
measure and the President is expected to sign the bill, averting a government shutdown.

**CMS Finalizes Changes to Long-term Video EEG Codes**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized changes to the value and reimbursement levels of long-term electroencephalograph (EEG) and video EEG (VEEG) professional and technical service codes in early November. *The Foundation submitted comments to CMS on the proposed rule at the end of September, expressing concerns that the changes would impede people with epilepsy’s access to needed care.* We want to thank all the advocates who took action in contacting their members of Congress to educate them about the importance of EEGs and timely access to these services for the epilepsy community and urge them to address this issue. As a result of your advocacy and efforts from the provider community, 3,850 letters were sent to Congress and *almost 70 Representatives signed on to a letter sent to CMS expressing their concerns over the proposed reductions and the impact the changes would have on critical care for the epilepsy community.*

As a result of the patient and provider community’s advocacy efforts, in the final rules, CMS recognized that its originally proposed changes devalued long-term video EEG services and accordingly increased the rates for several of the professional component codes. However, the final values still represent a significant decrease from the previous coding levels. Additionally, CMS pulled back its proposed rates for technical services in favor of contractor pricing for 2020, meaning those rates will be negotiated between payers and providers. The Epilepsy Foundation will monitor any impact on people with epilepsy moving forward.

**Foundation Hosts Briefing on Capitol Hill on Seizure First Aid and Priorities for the Epilepsy Community**

In honor of National Epilepsy Awareness Month, the Foundation hosted a briefing, *Stay Safe Side: Seizure First Aid and Priorities for the Epilepsy Community*, on Capitol Hill on November 14. At the briefing, the Foundation’s Chief Medical and Innovation Officer, Jacqueline French, MD educated congressional staff about epilepsy and trained them on the *importance of seizure recognition and first aid.* Priscilla Kobi, MS, Clinical Research Coordinator at the Epilepsy Foundation, proudly shared her journey of living with epilepsy and Laura Weidner, Vice President of Government Relations and Advocacy, provided an overview of the Foundation’s *policy priorities.*
Epilepsy Foundation hosted a briefing, *Stay Safe Side: Seizure First Aid and Priorities for the Epilepsy Community*, on Capitol Hill in honor of National Epilepsy Awareness Month.

**Open Enrollment in Medicare and the Marketplace**

It’s open enrollment season! People seeking to buy or change their Medicare or Marketplace plan must do so during open enrollment unless a specific exception occurs like moving out of state, getting married, or having a baby. Since each year, plans make changes to benefits and costs, and new plans are available, your current plan may or may not be the best plan for you in 2020. It is very important to use the open enrollment time-period to compare your coverage choices and find the plan that best meets your prescription drug needs at the lowest cost.

The annual open enrollment for Medicare prescription drug coverage (part D) and Medicare Advantage began on October 15, 2019 and will run through December 7, 2019 for coverage beginning January 1, 2020. Visit [medicare.gov](http://medicare.gov) or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to learn more.

*Read the 2020 Medicare Part D Open Enrollment FAQ Brochure*

The open enrollment period for the Marketplace runs from November 1, 2019 until December 15, 2019 for coverage beginning January 1, 2020. Learn more about your options at [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov) or 1-800-318-2596 (TTY: 1-855-889-4325). Individuals may be eligible for premium tax credits that will help make coverage more affordable.

*Tips about the Health Insurance Marketplace*
Get Ready to Apply or Re-enroll with this Checklist

You can find these resources and more at advocacy.epilepsy.com/access-to-care.

Above: Pictures of proclamations across the states including the city of Birmingham, Arizona, Hidalgo County in Texas, and Connecticut.

State Advocacy

Epilepsy Awareness Proclamations Across the States

To commemorate National Epilepsy Awareness Month, local Epilepsy Foundation offices and advocates have asked their Governors, mayors, legislatures and city councils to recognize a certain day or the entire month of November to continue to raise awareness about epilepsy. There have been numerous proclamations and resolutions signed across the nation in states such as Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Kentucky, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Utah! Congratulations to the local offices and advocates who helped get these issued!
Above: The Epilepsy Foundation of Alabama attended the signing of the epilepsy awareness month proclamation by Governor Kay Ivey (left) and the signing of an End Epilepsy Day proclamation for the city of Trussville (right). Below: Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton presents the Epilepsy Foundation of Kentuckiana with a proclamation for epilepsy awareness month.

New Jersey’s Seizure Safe Schools Legislation Passes Out of Committee

Paul’s Law (S. 4141) was heard in the New Jersey Senate Education Committee last week and passed unanimously out of committee. Paul St. Pierre, the bill’s namesake, and his mother, Colleen, testified at the hearing. The Senate bill will now move to the full Senate for a vote. A companion bill to Paul’s Law was recently introduced in the New Jersey Assembly (A. 6011).
New Jersey State Senator James Beach and Paul St. Pierre celebrating the passing of S. 4141 out of committee.

Watch the Recording of Advocating for Seizure Safe Schools Webinar

Thank you to everyone who was able to join the Foundation for an educational webinar on “Advocating for Seizure Safe Schools,” which was held earlier this November. For those who were unable to attend or who would like to re-watch the presentation, you can watch and listen to the webinar here.

Learn more about the legislation and this initiative at advocacy.epilepsy.com/seizuresafeschools.
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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