



January 13, 2016

Meetings with the White House

The White House provided a letter to NASW congratulating us on our 60th Anniversary. A copy of the letter will be mailed to each Chapter.

Meetings with Legislative Offices

On December 14 and 15, NASW and Polsinelli staff met with staffers in offices of members of Congress on committees of jurisdiction for the Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 2173/H.R. 3712).

- Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL-16) on Health Subcommittee of House Ways and Means Committee
- Rep. Leonard Lance (R-NJ-7) on Health Subcommittee of House Energy and Commerce Committee
- Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN-7) on Health Subcommittee of House Energy and Commerce Committee
- Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA) on Senate Finance Committee
- Rep. Ed Whitfield (R-KY-1) on Health Subcommittee of House Energy and Commerce Committee
- Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA-7) on Health Subcommittee of House Ways and Means Committee

The Florida, New Jersey, Kentucky, Washington and Tennessee chapters were following up with the offices from their states.

Other Legislative Activity

- On December 10, 2015, the president signed bipartisan legislation to authorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Every Student Succeeds Act replaces No Child Left Behind Act. Thanks in part to advocacy by social workers, school social workers are included throughout Titles I (compensatory education) and II (training and professional development). Title IV is the part of the bill that contains "whole child" programs and mental health services. Where previously there was a stand-alone program – the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program, now there are three block-granted programs that include much of what is in Title IV of No Child Left Behind. NASW Advocacy Listserv members responded to an action alert on this bill.
- The Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act (S. 1719) passed the Senate by unanimous consent in early December, just five months after its introduction by Senators Susan Collins (D-ME) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI). (Senator and social worker Barbara Mikulski, D-MD, was one of the original cosponsors.) The bill awaits further action in the House (H.R. 3099), where it was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce following Senate passage. NASW supported this legislation in sign-on letters to both the [Senate](#) and the [House](#) last July. The Eldercare Workforce Alliance, to which NASW belongs, also [supports the RAISE ACT](#).
- On December 18, the House and Senate passed the omnibus spending bill that will fund the government through Fiscal Year 2016. President Obama subsequently signed the bill into law. Among other provisions, the legislation includes the following items supported by NASW:
 - \$38.7 million for Title VII and Title VIII Geriatrics Workforce Education Programs (GWEP), which benefit social work faculty, students, and community-based health care providers of various disciplines. Although the FY2016 funding is level with that of FY2015, it exceeds the proposed Senate budget of \$35 million—a cut against which NASW advocated through sign-on letters sent by the [Eldercare Workforce Alliance](#) (EWA) and the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) ([April](#) letter; [November](#)).
 - \$2 billion increase in funding for NIH, including a \$350 million increase for research on Alzheimer’s disease—supported by NASW through sign on letters with EWA ([House](#), [Senate](#)), [Friends of the National Institute on Aging](#) (FoNIA), and [Leaders Engaged on Alzheimer’s Disease](#) (LEAD).
 - \$158 million for Caregivers Support Formula Grants, a \$6.5 million increase above FY2015—supported by NASW through sign on letters with EWA ([House](#), [Senate](#)) and [LCAO](#)
 - \$834.7 million for the Senior Nutrition Program, a \$20.1 million increase above FY2015—supported by NASW through a sign on letter with [LCAO](#).
 - \$8 million for the Elder Justice Initiative, an increase of \$4 million above FY2015—supported by NASW through a sign on letter with LCAO ([April](#); [November](#)).
 - \$3.36 million for the Lifespan Respite Care Program, a \$1 million increase over FY2015—supported by NASW through sign on letters with EWA ([House](#), [Senate](#)), [LCAO](#), and the [ARCH National Respite Network](#)
- Key provisions of tax credits for low-income working families were made permanent in a tax package that passed the House ([318-109](#)) and the Senate in December (in the Senate, it was

combined with the FY16 omnibus spending bill before passage). The tax package addressed more than 50 mostly-corporate tax breaks and will cost \$622 billion over 10 years. Some of these corporate breaks were made permanent, while others were extended for two or five years. The deal was signed by the President on December 18, 2015.

By making permanent the 2009 improvements to the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and American Opportunity Tax Credit, more poor and near-poor working families and college students will be reached. As the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [notes](#), up to 50 million Americans will benefit from making the provisions permanent, including up to 25 million children. NASW is in coalition with organizations who helped move these tax extensions forward.

Meetings with Formal Partners

NASW staff met with the Clinical Social Work Association to discuss our joint public policy agenda.

Polsinelli staff met with Lewis-Burke (lobby firm for CSWE) staff to strategize public policy actions.

NASW is working with the Vera Institute of Justice, which is working with five States (through a federal grant) on the Safe Alternatives to Segregation Initiative. The initiative is designed to advise the participating states on solitary confinement best practices, especially as they relate to mental health consequences of isolation. Mel Wilson is on the Advisory Committee for the Initiative. He also is a member of the Vera Solitary Confinement Roundtable which meets quarterly. His main focus is on the social work role from a mental health services standpoint. He is completing a social justice brief on the use of segregation from social work perspective. The brief deals mainly with mental health needs of those with histories of being in solitary confinement.

Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) Meeting

NASW staff attended the December MHLG meeting. Below are the topics discussed.

1. Juvenile Justice; Crime Prevention and Youth Development Caucus; Anna Hevia, Legislative Assistant, Office of Rep. Tony Cárdenas (D-CA-29)

Rep. Cárdenas has been in elected office for 18 years. He has seen the inefficiencies of the juvenile justice system. He sits on the Health Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. He emphasizes the role of public health and mental health in juvenile justice. He wants to end juvenile life sentences without parole. He sees the need for a restorative model.

The At-Risk Youth Medicaid Protection Act – his office is seeking to reintroduce this in the 114th Congress. The issue is that some states terminate Medicaid coverage for youth in the juvenile justice system. The bill would make it so that “states shall not terminate Medicaid coverage.

Juvenile Solitary Confinement – has legislative language in Judiciary bill – they are working on this. NASW works in coalitions on this issue.

2. Americans for Responsible Solutions; Miri Cypers, Director of Federal Affairs and Partnerships and Katherine Phillips, Advocacy Associate

ARS was founded in 2013 by former Rep. Gabbie Giffords and Mark Kelly. It provides a moderate and independent voice on gun violence prevention. They do state and federal advocacy as well as political work. They have almost 1 million supporters.

States are making progress – 18 states expanded background checks; 30 new laws related to domestic violence since 2008.

They are pushing for administrative action on background checks.

They are careful with language around mental health since people with mental health issues are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators.

California has a gun restraining order legislation which places a one-year temporary prohibition of having guns if there is a restraining order against you.

Suicide prevention – 2/3 of gun deaths are suicides.

In regards to Sen. Cornyn's (R-TX) mental health bill (S. 2002), they have serious concerns about gun provisions. NASW supports Sen. Cornyn's bill. They have not taken a position on the Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA-18) bill (H.R. 2646). NASW is staying silent on Rep. Murphy's bill.

3. The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act (H.R. 1854/S. 993); Jamal (Jay) Nelson, Manager, Government Affairs, Council of State Governments Justice Center

Rep. Doug Collins (R-GA-9) introduced this bill to reauthorize the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act. It was approved in 2004 and reauthorized in 2008. It was funded at \$8.5 million for FY15. The House proposed funding for FY16 is \$13 million and the Senate's is \$9 million. There are 68 co-sponsors for the bill and it is bi-partisan. There will be a markup in the House Judiciary Committee in January and the Senate may pass it under unanimous consent.

NASW is part of this coalition.

4. Coalition Updates

Rep. Kennedy (D-MA-4) is introducing a parity oversight bill.

Rep. Pallone (D-NJ-6) may introduce an alternative to Rep. Murphy's (R-PA-18) bill.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has a senate companion bill on post-partum depression.

Support Letters

NASW has signed onto a number of letters of support. You can find a list of letters of support on our [web page](#). A sample of letters from mid-November - December is below.

- [NASW signs on to letter supporting Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act \(12/10/15\)](#)
- [NASW joins over 140 national organizations in opposing anti-refugee legislation in Congress \(11/30/15\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to Leadership Council of Aging Organizations letter advocating for continued Fiscal Year 2016 funding for Older Americans Act programs, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program, and other services benefiting older adults \(11/17/15\)](#)

NASW has also submitted its own comments to the Administration. You can find this list on our [web page](#) as well. A sample of comments from 2015 is below.

- [NASW Sends Letter of Support for S. 1945, the Mental Health Reform Act of 2015 \(10/16/15\)](#)
- [NASW responds to proposed rule reforming requirements for long-term care facilities, advocating for professional social work qualifications and improved social work staffing ratios \(10/14/15\)](#)
- [NASW submits comments to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on the calendar year 2016 Physician Fee Schedule proposed rule \(9/8/2015\)](#)
- [NASW submits comments to the National Quality Forum on person-centered care for dually eligible beneficiaries \(7/27/15\)](#)
- [NASW submits comments to the White House Conference on Aging \(7/23/2015\)](#)
- [NASW encourages the Center for Medicaid and Medicare \(CMS\) to expand Medicaid coverage to include routine HIV screening to persons 15 years of age and older \(2/24/15\)](#)