



**GOVERNMENT RELATIONS/POLITICAL ACTION UNIT
QUARTERLY REPORT**

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108TH CONGRESS

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ACTION NETWORK FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (ANSWER)

By Ann Bradford, MSW, senior government relations associate

National Center for Social Work Research Act 2003 (H.R.3887/S.73)

The National Center for Social Work Research Center Act authorizes the establishment of a social work research center to support, promote, and disseminate research on the prevention and treatment of critical health and social problems.

ANSWER continues to seek additional cosponsors for H.R.3887 and S.73, however, this process has been moving more slowly than in years past. Rep. Rodriguez (D-TX), the lead sponsor of H.R.3887, reintroduced the House bill in March with language that would place the research center at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Therefore, ANSWER restarted the process of obtaining co-sponsorship of the bill. The strategy for accomplishing this has been to attempt to gain additional Republican support before seeking more Democratic co-sponsors. The reasoning for this is that while Democrats have been very supportive of the bill, many Republicans will not become co-sponsors of a bill if it appears to be a Democratic initiative.

H.R.3887 currently has 29 cosponsors, and S.73 has two cosponsors in addition to the bill's original sponsor, Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI). Both of the bills have bipartisan support, which is extremely important in the current political climate. In addition to the two Republican cosponsors of H.R.3887, Reps. Greenwood (R-PA) and Leach (R-IA), S.73 is cosponsored by Sen. Snowe (R-ME). A summary of S.73/H.R.3887 is posted on the ANSWER issue page on the NASW Web site:

<https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/answer/legislation/default.asp>

NASW ACTION

NASW supports S.73/H.R.3887 and continues to work with the other ANSWER Coalition members in lobbying both Republican and Democratic members of Congress to sign on as co-sponsors to the National Center for Social Work Research Act. NASW has also asked Sen. Specter (R-PA), Chairman of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, and Sen. Murray (D-WA) to request the inclusion of language in the Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Committee Report that encourages the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to follow through on the goals set in its 2003 report to Congress on social work research.

In the coming year, the Coalition plans to place a higher priority on legislative issues related to loan forgiveness for social workers and increasing federal funding of child welfare training programs. Additional information on NASW's efforts regarding these two issues can be found in this report.

CHILD WELFARE

By Cynthia Woodside, senior government relations associate

Child Welfare Financing

The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care released its recommendations on child welfare financing and court improvement on May 18, 2004. Commission members have been meeting with the Administration and Congress with the goal of having legislation implementing their recommendations introduced by the time Congress adjourns this fall. Even if that goal is met, Congress will not have sufficient time to pass comprehensive child welfare reforms during this session. The Pew Commission report is available at <http://pewfostercare.org/>

NASW ACTION

NASW is working with other national organizations concerned with child welfare on assessing the impact of the Pew Commission recommendations and looking at possible alternatives. Overall, NASW is supportive of some of the Commission's recommendations, but believes others would do more harm than good.

Most disturbing to the Association is the Commission's proposal to eliminate entitlement funding for the Title IV-E training program. The program currently funds the agency-university training partnerships,

which the General Accounting Office (GAO) found to be promising in addressing the problems of staff recruitment and retention. The Commission recommends creating a Safe Children, Strong Families (block) Grant that combines federal funding for the Title IV-E training program, Title IV-E administration, and Title IV-B child welfare services. That funding structure would severely hinder state efforts to make workforce improvements and would pit such improvements against the vast unmet need for child welfare services.

NASW's press release on the Pew recommendations, along with additional information on child welfare, is posted on the child welfare advocacy page of the NASW Web site:
https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/child_welfare.asp

Child Welfare Appropriations

Congress is having difficulty passing a budget for FY 2005, which has slowed work on the 13 appropriations bills, including the bill that funds the major child welfare programs. The President's budget proposed increasing funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Title I basic state grants from \$22 million in FY04 to \$42 million in FY05, and for CAPTA Title II community-based prevention grants from \$33 million in FY04 to \$66 million in FY05. The President also proposed to fully fund the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) program at \$505 million.

NASW ACTION

NASW is supporting the child welfare funding increases proposed by the President. The Association signed onto a letter drafted by the National Child Abuse Coalition thanking the President and asking him to promote his proposed increases in negotiations with Congress. The Association also urged NASW members to ask their representatives to sign a letter circulated by Reps. George Miller (D-CA) and Jim Greenwood (R-PA) to House appropriators urging their support for the increases. The Miller-Greenwood letter garnered signatures from 53 representatives.

Child Welfare Media

Cynthia Woodside was interviewed by National Public Radio (NPR) regarding states' failures on meeting the goals of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) required by the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The interview aired on "All Things Considered" on April 26, 2004. The transcript is available at <http://www.npr.org/programs/atc/>

CIVIL RIGHTS

By Lawrence Moore, III, senior government relations associate

Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) (S.16)

ENDA is a critical piece of civil rights legislation, because it will redress historical labor market discrimination perpetrated against gays and lesbians solely attributed to their sexual orientation. Thus far, in the House, ENDA has not been reintroduced; previously the bill had 193 House cosponsors. However, Sen. Tom Daschle (D-SD) reintroduced ENDA in the Senate on January 7, 2003 (S.16). Currently, S.16 has 27 Senate cosponsors who have expressed interest in combating labor market discrimination.

NASW ACTION

NASW continues to diligently pursue enactment of ENDA through progressive coalition efforts with the Human Rights Campaign, the National Urban League, People For the American Way, the AFL-CIO, and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. These partnerships have emphasized increasing Senate co-sponsorship, in addition to advocating for ENDA's reintroduction in the House of Representatives. The Association continues to advocate before the Senate Finance Committee, while also targeting previous House cosponsors and supporters, including the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Women's Caucus, and moderate Republicans. Past alerts and updates can be found on NASW's Web site: http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/civil_rights.asp

Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (H.R.4204/S.966)

Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) and Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2003 (H.R.4204/S.966) on April 22, 2004 and May 1, 2004, respectively. Enactment of hate crimes legislation remains one of NASW's principle legislative priorities. Currently, there are 175 cosponsors in the House and 49 in the Senate, who are committed to alleviating bias-induced violence. In short, the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act would allow the federal government to work with state and local authorities to punish hate crimes to the fullest extent possible, and to expand the definition of a hate crime to include those motivated by disability, gender, or sexual orientation. While NASW believes that states should continue to play a primary role in the prosecution of hate crime violence, federal law is essential to complement state statutes and to help states prosecute these complicated and expensive cases.

NASW ACTION

NASW continues to work with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, People For the American Way, the Human Rights Campaign, and the NAACP to secure passage of the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act. The Association continues to make congressional visits to House and Senate Judiciary Committee members, with particular focus on moderate Republicans. Further, the Association has participated in a congressional letter drop, indicating various institutional positions in support of the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act. Past alerts and updates can be found on NASW's Web site: http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/civil_rights.asp

Federal Marriage Amendment (H.J. Res.56/S.J.Res. 26)

Rep. Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO) and Sen. Wayne Allard (R-CO) introduced the Federal Marriage Amendment (H.J.Res.56/S.J.Res.26), on May 21, 2003 and November 25, 2003, respectively. The Amendment explicitly attempts to prohibit same-sex marriages and prevent "activist judges" from requiring states to create civil unions. The Resolution, however, requires a two-thirds majority in both chambers for ratification. Currently, there are 124 House and 10 Senate cosponsors. In February, President Bush endorsed the Amendment in principle because it espouses his belief that marriage in the United States should consist of only a union of a man and a woman. NASW is profoundly opposed to any proposal that would alter America's most significant document for the express purpose of precluding groups or individuals from its assurances of equal protection. Further, NASW is equally opposed to writing discrimination into the Constitution, intruding upon the traditional authority of states in matters of family law.

NASW ACTION

The Association is collaborating with historical civil rights entities, including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the NAACP, the Human Rights Campaign, the Negro Council For Women, and other groups that support equal protection for all. NASW is concentrating its advocacy efforts on the House and Senate Judiciary Committees, of specific interest are its Republican members.

ECONOMIC EQUITY

By Lawrence Moore, III, senior government relations associate

The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2003 (S.2370/H.R.965)

The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2004 would raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.65 per hour over a two-year period. Wages would increase by \$1.50 in increments of \$0.75 per year. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) introduced the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2004 in the Senate (S.2370) on April 29, 2004 and in the House, Rep. George Miller (D-CA) currently sponsors the companion legislation (H.R. 965). Presently, there are 26 Senate and 104 House cosponsors. NASW believes that the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2004 will appreciably affect the quality of life for women, children, minorities, and families across this great nation by providing meaningful wages that offset poverty levels.

NASW ACTION

NASW is working with the Campaign For a Fair Minimum Wage, the Food and Commercial Workers Union, AFL-CIO, the American Psychological Association, and the United States Catholic Conference of

Bishops to secure passage of this initiative. Thus far, advocacy visits have been made, specifically focusing on the House Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, and on Senate Republicans, including Sens. Alexander (TN), Allard (CO), Allen (VA), Bond (MO), Burns (MT), Campbell (CO), Chafee (RI), Coleman (MN), Collins (ME), DeWine (OH), Fitzgerald (IL), Frist (TN), and Snowe (ME). Moreover, the Association continues to work with Sen. Kennedy's (D-MA) legislative staff concerning political and coalition strategy. Past alerts and updates can be found on NASW's Web site:

http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/civil_rights.asp

The Fair Pay Act (H.R.1695/S.841)

Introduced in both the House and Senate on April 9, 2003, by Rep. Holmes-Norton (D-DC) and Sen. Harkin (D-IA), the Fair Pay Act (H.R.1695/S.841) attempts to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 through the elimination of sex and race discrimination in the wage-setting system. Most women and minorities are disproportionately segregated into a small number of jobs, such as clerical, service workers, nurses, social service providers, and teachers. Historically, these positions have been devalued and underpaid because of their occupants' gender or race. NASW believes that The Fair Pay Act would expand the protections of The Equal Pay Act by safeguarding women and minorities against wage discrimination in equivalent jobs with similar skills and responsibilities to predominantly white male jobs. Currently, there are 20 House and eight Senate cosponsors.

NASW ACTION

Legislative strategy consists of working with the foremost coalition on gender equity concerns, the National Committee on Pay Equity. NASW's advocacy efforts continue to focus on moderate Republicans and Democrats who serve on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, as well as on Republican senators on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. In addition, NASW will be collaborating with The National Committee on Pay Equity and other gender-based entities on the implementation of a congressional advocacy day consisting of civil rights, labor, and religious partners who steadfastly endorse pay equity. Past alerts and updates can be found on NASW's Web site:

http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/civil_rights

EDUCATION

By Ann Bradford, MSW, senior government relations associate

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (S.1248/H.R.1350)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Reauthorization Act, seeks to reauthorize IDEA with a number of major changes from current law. Under H.R.1350, the House passed version of the bill, all students will be treated the same when it comes to discipline, regardless of disabilities (current law allows for the removal of a student with a disability for up to 45 days only if the problem behavior involves weapons or drugs). Other changes include schools no longer being required to conduct a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) or manifestation determination before removing a student from the classroom because of discipline problems. The bill also authorizes \$11.1 billion for FY04 and another \$2.5 billion for FY05.

Unlike the House bill, S.1248 was drafted as a bipartisan bill, and it includes behavioral assessments and manifestation determinations, as part of the discipline process. In addition, this bill addresses the requirements that related services personnel must meet. During the Senate's consideration of S.1248 (passed in May 2004), there was a failed attempt to pass an amendment for the mandatory full funding of IDEA. Instead, the Senate passed an amendment that authorizes Congress to fully fund IDEA by 2011 using discretionary funds. Because the funding is not mandatory, there is no guarantee that the program will be fully funded by 2011.

The House and Senate are preparing to go to conference to devise a compromise IDEA bill, however, the Senate Democrats are seeking a pre-conference agreement that the Republicans oppose. This disagreement could prevent the two chambers from going to conference this year. That would mean that the process of drafting and passing a reauthorization bill would have to be undertaken again next year

after the start of the 109th Congress. A summary of H.R.1350/S.1248 is posted on the education issues page on NASW's Web site: <https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/education.asp>

NASW ACTION

While there are some problems with S.1248, NASW does support the Senate bill over the House bill. NASW continues to collaborate with the member organizations of the National Alliance of Pupil Services Organizations (NAPSO) and the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) to advocate for improvements in the IDEA reauthorization bill. NASW collaborated through joint legislative office visits, sign-on letters, and the distribution of legislative principles and language drafted by NAPSO and CCD. In addition, NASW issued legislative alerts to request that members send letters to their members of Congress regarding IDEA reauthorization.

Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (H.R.4473)

The President's FY05 budget request eliminates the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (ESSCP), which was reauthorized in the No Child Left Behind Act. ESSCP, formerly known as the Elementary School Counseling Demonstration Program, is a discretionary grant program that provides grants to school districts to establish or expand comprehensive counseling programs and mental health services through qualified school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors.

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees will consider whether to fund this program when they each begin working on separate versions of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bills later this year. Rep. Obey (D-WI), Ranking Minority Member of the House Appropriations Committee, and other Democrats from the Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee included \$33.8 million in H.R.4473, the "Educational Opportunity for the 21st Century Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2005." This is considered a "message bill" that will serve as an alternative to the bill that the Subcommittee will actually consider. A summary of the ESSCP is posted on the education issues page on NASW's web page: <https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/education.asp>

NASW ACTION

NASW is in strong support of increasing funding for ESSCP. Therefore, NASW continues to partner with the School Social Work Association of America, the American Counseling Association, the American School Counselor Association, and the National Association of School Psychologists to lobby for this program to be included in the FY05 appropriations bills. In addition to conducting Hill visits and sending letters, NASW continues to use legislative alerts to encourage its members to contact their members of Congress through phone calls and letters sent through Congress Web.

FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE

By Ann Bradford, MSW, senior government relations associate

Charitable Giving Act (H.R.7) and the CARE Act of 2003 (S.476)

The House and Senate have yet to go to conference on their two versions of the faith-based initiative bills (H.R.7/S.476). Senate Democrats have been stalling attempts to move forward because of the fear that they will be shut out of conference negotiations. If this happens, it would be easy for the conferees to remove the language in the Senate bill that includes restoration of the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). While the Republican leadership in the Senate has pledged to include the Democrats in the negotiations process, House leadership has failed to make a similar promise.

Neither the House nor the Senate bill includes language that would protect faith-based organizations that receive federal funds from anti-discrimination hiring laws. However, President Bush and the congressional supporters of the faith-based initiative are not overly concerned about the exclusion of this language, since the President has signed an Executive Order that offers this protection through federal regulations. Future presidents can reverse Executive Orders. A summary of H.R.7/S.476 is posted on the faith-based initiative issue page of the NASW website:

<https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/faith.asp>

On a related note, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives has been conducting forums across the country this year in an effort to educate faith-based and community organizations about how they can apply for funds from the federal government. NASW staff attended the forum held in Washington, DC. It was made clear during the forum that federal dollars can be distributed through the Access To Recovery pilot program to organizations that do not have licensed professionals providing substance abuse treatment services.

NASW ACTION

While both the House and Senate faith-based initiative bills have been scaled down to being basic tax bills, NASW supports the Senate version of the faith-based initiative bill over the House bill because it was drafted in a bipartisan manner and includes funding for SSBG.

NASW has joined with the Citizens Against Religious Discrimination (CARD) Coalition to express concerns to members of Congress and the Administration regarding discrimination in hiring practices by faith-based organizations and in service delivery. NASW is also partnering with the Social Services Block Grant Coalition in an attempt to ensure that SSBG funding is included in the final version of the faith-based initiative bill.

In addition, NASW continues to voice concern about the House passed version of the Head Start reauthorization bill that allows for religious discrimination in the hiring of teachers and in the use of parent volunteers. The Senate bill, which has been voted out of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee but not yet considered by the full Senate, does not include this discriminatory language.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

By James K. Finley, MPA, senior government relations associate

Association Health Plans (AHP) (S.545/H.R.660)

Association Health Plans (AHPs) permit small businesses to link through trade and professional associations to collectively purchase health benefits at lower rates than they are typically offered individually. Current law requires AHPs to be regulated under both federal and state law. The Small Business Fairness Act would exempt AHPs from state laws, including consumer protections, mandated benefit laws, and other safeguards thus, significantly increasing the risk for fraud and abuse. The House version (H.R.660) passed the full House in June 2003 and it was passed again in May 2004, largely along a partisan vote. The Senate is considering the Small Business Health Fairness Act (S.545) this year. NASW opposes H.R.660/S.545, because it would exempt AHPs from state laws and regulations, eviscerating existing consumer protections and increasing health insurance costs for those employee

groups left out of the new plans. More information can be found on the NASW Web site:
<http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/alerts/021904.asp>

NASW ACTION

During this quarter NASW has taken a number of steps to defeat this legislation. The Association has been active in a coalition opposed to the measure, and has lobbied on it extensively. Our lobbying efforts have entailed the release of action alerts asking our grassroots membership to express opposition, contacts with congressional staff, and letters of opposition to both House and Senate offices. We will continue to monitor the movement of S.545 and take necessary steps to oppose its passage.

Clinical Social Work Medicare Equity Act (CSWMEA) (S.343/H.R.707)

Because of a provision in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, clinical social workers may no longer bill Medicare Part B directly for psychotherapy services to clients residing in skilled nursing facilities. The situation is further complicated by the severely inadequate national policy on the provision of mental health services under Medicare. Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Reps. Fortney "Pete" Stark (D-CA-13) and James Leach (R-IA-2) introduced the Clinical Social Work Medicare Equity Act of 2003 (S.343/H.R.707), to address this issue.

NASW ACTION

The Association has been working with key senators and representatives to address this problem and has secured introduction of this legislative remedy. Although this legislation was not passed in the 107th Congress, NASW continues to work with key senators and representatives on this issue in the 108th Congress. Currently, Congress will not move any Medicare legislation this year, so NASW is building up grassroots membership support for the measure in target states and congressional districts.

Health Disparities

Severe racial and ethnic disparities continue to plague the nation's health care delivery system. Disparities in personal health and health care delivery systems cost individuals, families, and the nation far too much in pain, suffering, illness, disability, premature deaths, and economic well-being. A year ago, a major report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) entitled, "Unequal Treatment," confirmed what many people have known all along:

"In America, minorities receive poorer quality health care than non-minorities, even when both groups have roughly the same insurance coverage, the same income, the same age and the same health conditions."

NASW, in coalition with other organizations, seeks to implement key IOM recommendations, including reducing the number of uninsured, improving the quality of health care, improving in the cultural and linguistic competence of providers, fostering innovative outreach programs, and ensuring that behavioral health services are fully available to all who need them. NASW also strongly supports equity and full recognition of the social work profession in solving these problems, as well as the vital role they play in the health delivery system.

NASW ACTION

NASW is working with a coalition of organizations to support new legislation to address health disparities. Such legislation is currently under development by the Senate leadership and among leaders of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. This legislation is expected to move next year, and NASW is working with these leaders to advance our goals.

Keeping Our Families Together Act (S.1704/H.R.3243)

Introduced on October 2, 2003, the Keeping Families Together Act (S.1704/H.R.3243) authorizes competitive grants for states to establish systems of individualized mental health treatment and family support services for children who are in custody or in danger of entering the custody of the state for the purpose of receiving mental health services. Eligible states would have laws or policies in effect that

ensure that children receive appropriate mental health services so that parents do not have to relinquish legal custody of children to obtain needed care. The program would assist states in establishing infrastructure for interagency cooperation and cross system financing and expanding public health insurance programs to cover these services after the grant expires.

NASW ACTION

This bipartisan legislation enjoys broad support from across the political spectrum. NASW has been vigorously lobbying for its support during this quarter. Working with a broad coalition of mental health and family advocacy organizations, NASW has made numerous calls to Hill offices in support of the bill and has helped to secure a number of key co-sponsors of the legislation.

Medicaid Spending

The Bush Administration continues to seek a method to cap federal expenditures for Medicaid. This year it has sought to encourage states to accept caps on their federal allotments in exchange for increased flexibility to control program expenditures. In addition, the Administration has put renewed pressure on states to clear up their administrative procedures, some of which CMS claims constitute fraud and abuse. Meanwhile, states continue to experience record high demands for additional Medicaid expenditures, resulting in the need for Congress to provide additional fiscal relief to the states by authorizing an extension of federal fiscal relief that was granted last year.

NASW ACTION

NASW was successful in its efforts with other organizations and coalitions to enact the FMAP increase last year while it defeated the Administration's effort to cap and block grant the program. NASW has continued to closely monitor activities and developments in the program. We are currently working closely with a national coalition of health care and disability advocates, to vigorously oppose any attempts to block grant or cap federal Medicaid funding. In addition, NASW is working to educate key members of Congress about the vital role of Medicaid in financing public mental health services.

Mental Health Parity

The fight for mental health parity was dealt a blow with the death of one of its primary proponents, U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone, late in 2002. Consequently, there has been less movement of mental health parity in 2004; however, NASW and its coalition partners continue to support passage. Senate Republican leadership has assured lead Senate sponsors [Sen. Domenici (R-NM) and Kennedy (D-MA)] that they will take up the bill early in 2004. HELP Committee Chair Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) hopes to soon move a modified bill through his committee and onto the floor. In the House, Speaker Hastert (R-IL-14) has continually expressed strong opposition to the bill. In response, Senate leaders are working on revised bill language to bring to the floor shortly that would be less sweeping and less prescriptive than the current text of the current Wellstone Act. For background information on the measure see the action alert page of the NASW Web site: <http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/updates/032803.asp>

NASW ACTION

In conjunction with the Mental Health Liaison Group, a coalition of provider and consumer mental health advocacy groups, NASW has strived for passage of full mental and behavioral health parity. This year NASW has continued to push hard for passage of the Paul Wellstone Mental Health Parity Act (S.486/H.R.953). The Association expects to release an action alert calling for House action, as soon as the Senate passes the bill.

Health Professions

The health professions training programs are designed to improve health care access in medically underserved areas and to low-income, health disparity populations by increasing health professionals willing and able to serve these population needs. The country's increasingly diverse population drives this need for expansion of the health care workforce. The programs provide support for health professions' schools that have demonstrated the greatest commitment to and success in training students, particularly

minorities, for health professions careers. Scholarship support also is provided for disadvantaged and minority students who attend health professions or nursing school. NASW is seeking to add social work to the list of allied health professions eligible for grant support. This change will make it easier for schools of social work to compete for funding.

NASW ACTION

NASW has sought and obtained federal agency support for our position to add social work as an allied health profession. During the quarter, NASW was able to identify such a recommendation working its way through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) approval and is advocating for its immediate release. With the release of the HHS recommendation, NASW will be better able to advocate for the required statutory change in the Health Professions Act renewal legislation, which the Senate is expected consider later this year.

LOAN FORGIVENESS

By Cynthia Woodside, senior government relations associate

Higher Education Act (HEA) (S.409/H.R.734 and H.R.1306)

No further action is expected on loan forgiveness legislation (Child Protective Services Student Loan Forgiveness Act, S.409/H.R.734 and the College Opportunity for a Better America Act, H.R.1306) before Congress adjourns this fall. Since a new Congress (the 109th) will convene in January 2005, all bills will need to be reintroduced next year. Like this year, loan forgiveness will be considered during congressional deliberations on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

NASW ACTION

NASW continues to explore ways to build support for loan forgiveness and other ways to make higher education more affordable for social workers. The Association has developed a number of advocacy tools and is working with other national organizations interested in promoting loan forgiveness for social workers and related professionals in child welfare and in schools.

NASW also is working with the Republican Main Street Partnership, an organization of moderate Republicans, to build congressional support for loan forgiveness. The Partnership has 11 members on the House and Senate Committees with jurisdiction over the HEA.

The latest advocacy tool, which consolidates a number of pieces produced by NASW over the last year, is posted on the loan forgiveness advocacy page of NASW's Web site:

https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/child_welfare.asp

SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (SSBG)

By Ann Bradford, MSW, senior government relations associate

SSBG is a flexible block grant addressing the needs of children and families, the elderly, and vulnerable adults. It enables them to avoid more expensive government assistance by helping them in their efforts to remain in the community in the most independent setting possible. SSBG was funded at \$2.8 billion in 1996, however, its funding has since been cut by over \$1 billion. SSBG funds are in danger of being cut even further this year when the House considers two budget process bills. These bills include putting a cap on the total amount of money spent on entitlement programs. This cap would be lower than the amount spent under current law, therefore, if one of these bills passes, SSBG would be faced with another major cut.

On a positive note, the Senate opposed President Bush's request to keep SSBG funding out of the charitable choice bills when it included a restoration of SSBG funds in S.476, the CARE Act of 2003 (faith-based initiative). The Senate addressed the massive cut in funding by providing \$1.375 billion in new funding for SSBG. However, the companion bill in the House, H.R.7, does not include the additional funding. Both chambers have passed their individual versions of this bill, however, they have yet to go to conference on the bills due to the concern of Senate Democrats that the Democrats will not be fully

included in the negotiation process. If they are not included in these negotiations, it will be much easier for the SSBG funds to be cut from the compromise bill. Additional information about SSBG funds and the CARE Act can be found on the faith-based initiative issue page on NASW's website: <http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/faith.asp>

NASW ACTION

NASW strongly supports attempts to increase funding for SSBG. Therefore, NASW continues to partner with other organizations from the Social Services Block Grant Coalition to lobby for SSBG funds to be included in the final faith-based initiative bill and to prevent further cuts from being made to the program. The lobbying effort includes signing on to letters being sent to Capitol Hill and the Administration by the SSBG Coalition and engaging NASW's grassroots network in a letter writing campaign to their members of Congress.

WELFARE

By Cynthia Woodside, senior government relations associate

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

The seventh short-term extension of the 1996 welfare law expires on June 30, 2004. At the time this report is being written (June 11), it is still unclear what action Congress will take. There is some indication that the House, concerned by Senate inaction, may refuse to pass another clean extension. Word is that the House leadership may attempt to add funding for marriage promotion activities, increases in the participation rates, or other provisions to the next extension.

The House passed its full reauthorization bill over a year ago in February 2003. The Senate made its first attempt to pass its version of the bill just over a month ago in late March/early April 2004. The Senate passed an amendment to increase child care funding by \$6 billion over five years, but could get no further.

With so few legislative days left in this Congressional session, it will be difficult to complete action on a full five-year reauthorization, but passage of a long-term clean extension also is unlikely. Given the worsening federal financial picture, any delay in finalizing a new bill puts future funding for TANF programs in jeopardy.

NASW ACTION

Amid the uncertainty, NASW continues to focus its efforts on building congressional support for two issues identified as Association priorities—improving services to families with disabilities and other barriers to employment, and reducing disparate treatment of racial and ethnic minorities.

NASW, along with other national disability, substance abuse, and mental health organizations, has been working with a number of Senate offices to extend the time participation in “rehabilitative services” can count as work beyond six months. Sens. Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Jim Jeffords (I-VT) are spearheading the effort, with support from a growing list of Senators, including Susan Collins (R-ME), Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), and Mary Landrieu (D-LA).

On the fair and equitable treatment issue, NASW has been working with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) Welfare Task Force, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI) is the primary sponsor.

Additional information is posted on the welfare reauthorization advocacy page on NASW's Web site: <https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/welfare/legislation/default.asp>

FIELD ORGANIZING

By Dina L. Zarrella, MSS, MLSP, senior field organizer

Grassroots Activities

NASW staff recruited 30 social workers to participate in Mental Health Parity Rallies during the week of June 6. Rallies took place in St. Paul, MN, Madison, WI, Chicago, IL, Cleveland, OH, and Pittsburgh, PA. Due to funeral activities in Washington, DC, for former President Reagan, planned activities at the Capitol were cancelled.

NASW staff organized an HIV/AIDS Advocacy Day on Thursday, May 27, in conjunction with the Sixteenth Annual National Conference on Social Work and HIV/AIDS. Twelve social workers made 22 visits to members of Congress to discuss the importance of increased funding for the Ryan White CARE Act in FY05 and for reauthorization of the Act in 2005.

Staff recruited more than 487 social workers from 41 states and the District of Columbia to participate in the March for Women's Lives on April 25, 2004. Fifty-three chapters signed on as co-sponsors to the March for Women's Lives and worked to recruit members to attend the march.

In this quarter (as of June 18), 272 individuals sent 1,313 letters and e-mails through Congress Web to their members of Congress. The issues that generated the most grassroots efforts included loan forgiveness, mental health parity, and funding for the Secondary and Elementary School Counseling Program.

Presentations

On May 26, 2 students from the University of Mississippi met with staff to learn about education-related legislation, field organizing, and political action.

On April 9, students from Millersville University met with staff to learn about Child Welfare and loan forgiveness legislation as well as political action and field organizing opportunities. Two students met with Sen. Rick Santorum regarding loan forgiveness.

Legislative Advocacy Network

As of June 16, 2,978 individuals are subscribed to the Legislative Advocacy Network Listserv. This is a 13 percent increase from March 2004.

The issue areas covered by the listserv include mental health, health, civil rights, child welfare, loan forgiveness, social work research, education, economic equity, social service funding, and faith-based initiatives. All NASW members are encouraged to join the [Legislative Advocacy Network Listserv](http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/networknew.asp) <http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/networknew.asp> to stay abreast of federal legislative activities that pertain to social workers and their clients.

Voter Registration

NASW is ramping up use of the online voter registration program, Election Impact. Staff sent information to all chapters to promote Election Impact, including a sample alert to members, a sample ad to use in newsletters, and directions on how to link from a chapter Web site to the online voter registration program. So far, we know of four chapters who have added a link to their Web site.

Staff sent the sample ad and sample alert to 645 Deans and Directors of social work programs and the Influencing Social Policy members to assist them in promoting voter registration to students, faculty, and staff.

In the first quarter of 2004, 36 people used Election Impact. Usage more than quadrupled in the second quarter of 2004 to 156 people as of June 18.

To register to vote or change your voter registration, you can link to Election Impact at www.socialworkers.org/advocacy through the link on the right side of the screen.

Web Site Development

Five action alerts and seven updates have been posted to the Web site this quarter. The action alerts are also sent directly to Chapter Presidents, Chapter Executive Directors, and the Legislative Advocacy Network Listserv. You can view the alerts and updates through www.socialworkers.org/advocacy

POLITICAL ACTION FOR CANDIDATE ELECTION (PACE)

By Vered Uziel, MSW, MPA, senior political affairs associate

Presidential Endorsement

PACE is working closely with the John Kerry for President Campaign to set up a meeting between Sen. Kerry and NASW's leadership. NASW's leadership would like to personally convey NASW's endorsement of Sen. Kerry's candidacy for the U.S. presidency in the 2004 general election.

2004 Congressional Endorsements and Contributions

The national PACE Board of Trustees made their fourth round of formal congressional endorsements in a teleconference call held on March 7, 2004. During this call, the Trustees authorized endorsements and contributions totaling \$71,000 to 11 senate incumbents and six challengers. Trustees also authorized endorsements and contributions totaling \$29,000 to 25 house incumbents and five challengers.

Candidate Interviews

PACE staff met with and interviewed six house challengers from across the country – Illinois, Wisconsin, Georgia, Connecticut, Florida, and New Mexico.

Fundraisers

Government Relations staff attended fundraisers for 11 house incumbents, five senate incumbents, and two senate challengers. In addition, they attended a combination of eight donor council events sponsored by organizations such as the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and The Republican Main Street Partnership.

Social Worker Wins Pennsylvania Primary

On April 27, 2004, Pennsylvania State Senator Allyson Schwartz, a social worker, defeated Joe Torsella in the Democratic primary in the 13th Congressional District. This is an open swing seat, in a key presidential battleground state. Allyson is a leader ready for Congress but she faces a tough fight in November. Her opponent in the general election, Melissa Brown, is running for this seat for the third time and came within four points of winning the seat in 2002.

Field Organizers

PACE staff is gearing up for the field organizers that will be placed in 10 states in July: Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Washington, and the PACE sponsored special projects in South Dakota and South Carolina. PACE staff began interviewing field organizers in May and will complete the hiring process by the end of June. Field organizers will attend training in the National Office from July 16-18, and will work in their respective states through the November elections. Organizers will primarily work on federal races, and will serve as liaisons between chapters and U.S. Senate and House campaigns targeted for mobilization.