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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Action Network for Social Work Education and Research (ANSWER)</u>	4
<i>National Center for Social Work Research Act 2003 (H.R.3887/S.73)</i>	4
<u>Child Welfare</u>	4
<i>Child Welfare Financing</i>	4
<i>Child Welfare Appropriations</i>	5
<u>Civil Rights</u>	6
<i>Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) (S.16)</i>	6
<i>Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (H.R.4204/S.966)</i>	6
<i>Federal Marriage Amendment (H.J. Res.56/S.J.Res. 26)</i>	6
<u>Economic Equity</u>	7
<i>The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2003 (S.2370/H.R.965)</i>	7
<i>The Fair Pay Act (H.R.1695/S.841)</i>	7
<u>Education</u>	7
<i>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (S.1248/H.R.1350)</i>	8
<i>Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program</i>	8
<u>Faith-Based Initiative</u>	9
<i>Charitable Giving Act (H.R.7) and the CARE Act of 2003 (S.476)</i>	9
<u>Health and Mental Health</u>	9
<i>Association Health Plans (S.545/H.R.660)</i>	9
<i>Clinical Social Work Medicare Equity Act (CSWMEA) (S.343/H.R.707)</i>	10
<i>Health Disparities</i>	10
<i>Youth Suicide Prevention</i>	10
<i>SAMHSA Appropriations Moves Ahead</i>	11
<i>Child Health Legislation</i>	11
<i>Keeping Our Families Together Act (S.1704/H.R.3243)</i>	11
<i>Medicaid Spending</i>	11
<i>Mental Health Parity</i>	12
<i>Health Professions</i>	12
<i>Respite Care</i>	12
<u>Loan Forgiveness</u>	13

<i>Higher Education Act (HEA) (S.409/H.R.734 and H.R.1306)</i>	13
Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)	13
Welfare	13
<i>Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act</i>	13
Field Organizing	14
<i>Grassroots Activities</i>	14
<i>Presentations</i>	14
<i>Legislative Advocacy Network</i>	14
<i>Voter Registration</i>	14
<i>Web Site Development</i>	15
Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE)	15
<i>Democratic & Republican National Conventions</i>	15
<i>Voter Identification of NASW's Membership</i>	15
<i>2004 Congressional Endorsements and Contributions</i>	15
<i>Fundraisers</i>	15
<i>Field Organizers</i>	15
<i>2004 Federal Electoral Activity: New Rules</i>	16
<i>Social Workers for Kerry-Edwards Buttons</i>	16

ACTION NETWORK FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (ANSWER)

By Ann Bradford, 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. Unfortunately, Rep. Rodriguez (D-TX), the lead sponsor of H.R. 3887, lost his bid for re-election during the Texas primary. Therefore, the momentum behind the House bill has decreased. The strategy has been to secure additional Republican cosponsors before seeking Democratic cosponsors. However, this has proven to be difficult. The ANSWER Coalition will be meeting later this year to discuss how best to proceed with this initiative during the upcoming 109th Congress in Rep. Rodriguez's absence.

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). While both of the bills have bipartisan support, it is highly unlikely that either bill will move forward before the 108th Congress adjourns. A summary of S.73/H.R.3887 is posted on the ANSWER issue page on the NASW Web page:

<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 cosponsors to the National Center for Social Work Research Act.

NASW successfully requested that Sen. Specter (R-PA), Chairman of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, and Sen. Murray (D-WA) include 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 the "NIH Plan for Social Work Research" (2003). The language states that the Committee "encourages continued implementation activities including working with appropriate social work practice, education, and research groups to host a trans-NIH conference on social work research."

In the coming year, the Coalition plans to focus on legislative issues related to loan forgiveness for social workers and on increasing federal funding of child welfare training programs as well as the Social Work Research Center. 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

On July 19, 2004, Rep. Wally Herger (R-CA) introduced the Child Safety, Adoption, and Family Enhancement (SAFE) Act (H.R. 4856). Herger is the Chairman of the Human Resources Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee, which has primary jurisdiction over the largest federal child welfare programs. These include Title IV-E Training, Foster Care, Adoption Assistance, and Promoting Safe and Stable Families.

The Child SAFE Act combines aspects of the Bush Administration's proposal to increase funding flexibility in Title IV-E with recommendations from the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care. Like both the Bush and Pew proposals, the Child SAFE Act would jeopardize continuation of the Title IV-E training program and its agency-university training partnerships by eliminating the program's entitlement funding and the 75 percent federal matching rate. The SAFE Act would combine funding for Title IV-E training and administration with funding for child welfare services under Title IV-B into a new Safe Children, Strong Families grant program. Funding for the grant would be capped, which would pit training, staffing, and other administrative expenditures against expenditures for prevention and other services. At present, no companion bill has been introduced in the Senate.

More information on the Child SAFE Act, including a draft e-mail/letter to send to members of Congress, is available on the child welfare advocacy page of the NASW Web site:

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

NASW ACTION

Since the majority of Title IV-E training funds are awarded to social work schools and programs, NASW sent out an action alert on August 12, 2004 to all its chapters, members, and social work educators explaining the danger the Child SAFE Act poses to the training program and the agency-university partnerships. The alert encouraged members to urge their representatives to change the bill prior to House passage. As of September 30, 2004, 191 letters and e-mails had been sent to members of Congress via NASW's Congress Web.

On August 3, 2004, NASW and the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) co-hosted a symposium entitled "Workforce and Accountability: Child and Family Services Reviews—Implications for Child Welfare Practice." Participants included Federal agency and congressional staff, social work educators, and representatives from advocacy and faith-based organizations, unions, and state-level governing bodies. Susan Orr, associate commissioner, U.S. Children's Bureau, presented the keynote address. Cynthia Woodside presented the findings from NASW's survey of the child welfare workforce, "If You're Right for the Job, It's the Best Job in the World." The survey is available on NASW's Web site at

<http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/children/NASWChildWelfareRpt062004.pdf>

Child Welfare Appropriations

On September 9, 2004, the House approved the FY 2005 appropriations bill for Labor-Health and Human Services (HHS) -Education (H.R. 5006), which includes slight increases for some child welfare programs. Funding for Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) basic state grants was increased from \$22 million this year to \$28.5 million for FY 05. CAPTA community-based prevention grants were increased from \$33 million to \$43 million. CAPTA discretionary funds for research, training, and demonstrations remained at \$26 million. Funding for the Title IV-B child welfare training program was increased by \$59,000 to \$7.5 million. Funding for the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program was increased by \$5 million to \$410 million.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill (S. 2810) on September 15, 2004. Further action in the Senate is not expected until after the election. The Senate bill includes \$27.5 million for CAPTA basic state grants, \$43 million for community-based prevention grants, and \$34 million for discretionary activities, which includes \$8 million in funding earmarked for special projects. Title IV-B child welfare training is funded at \$7.5 million and the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program at \$405 million.

Neither the House nor Senate increases match the size of the increases proposed by President Bush. If enacted, however, they still would mark the first increases in CAPTA funding in ten years.

NASW ACTION

The Association urged NASW members to ask their representatives and senators to support the President's proposed funding increases for child welfare programs and is continuing to work with the National Child Abuse Coalition on advocating for the largest funding increases possible.

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 because of their sexual orientation. Thus far, ENDA has not been reintroduced in the House. 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 that 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, 178 cosponsors in the House and 49 in the Senate 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. In addition, 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. 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.

On September 30, 2004, the House joined the Senate in refusing to approve a constitutional amendment to bar same-sex marriage, described by Republican supporters as a vital protection for traditional families, but denounced by Democratic foes as a divisive pre-election ploy to inflame bias. The vote by the Republican-controlled House was 227 to 186 in favor of writing the same-sex marriage ban into the Constitution, 49 short of the two-thirds majority needed to approve an amendment and send it to the states for ratification. The Senate, also Republican-controlled, voted against taking up the amendment 50 to 48 in July.

NASW ACTION

In defeating the Amendment, the Association collaborated with the American Psychological Association as well as historical civil rights groups including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the NAACP, the Human Rights Campaign, People For the American Way, the National Urban League, and other groups that support equal protection for all.

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, 27 Senators and 104 House members are cosponsoring the bill. 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. So far, advocacy visits have focused specifically 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). The Association continues to work with Sen. Kennedy's (D-MA) legislative staff on a 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 by eliminating 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, 20 House members and eight Senators are cosponsoring the act.

NASW ACTION

NASW's 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 with participation from 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, senior government relations associate

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

The bills to re-authorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) seek 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 disability (current law allows for the removal of a student with a disability for up to 45 days if the problem behavior involves weapons or drugs). In other changes, schools will no longer be 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, which was 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. Senators Gregg (R-NH) and Kennedy (D-MA) have developed a pre-conference agreement that both the Republicans and Democrats approved. All members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee will serve as conferees. The House has yet to name its conferees. A summary of H.R.1350/S.1248 is posted on the education issues page on NASW's Web page:

<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 version. NASW continues to partner with members 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. This was done through office visits, sign-on letters, and the distribution of legislative principles and language drafted by NAPSO and CCD. In addition, NASW issued legislative alerts requesting that members send letters to their Congressional representatives to reauthorize IDEA.

Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program

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.

Fortunately, both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees included funding for the ESSCP in their individual versions of the FY05 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bills. The House bill funds the program at \$33.8 million and the Senate bill includes \$36 million. It is expected that the two chambers will meet in the middle on the final sum when a compromise bill is drafted.

In addition to providing funds for the ESSCP, at the request of NASW, the American Counseling Association, the School Social Work Association of America, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the American School Counselor Association, the Senate Appropriations Committee included report language (S. Rept. 108-345) that encourages the Department of Education to "include questions in the Schools and Staffing Survey that would allow the collection and publication of accurate and timely data about the ratios of students to each of the following: school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists." 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 supports increasing funding for the 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 an increase in funding for this program. In addition to conducting Hill visits and sending letters, NASW continued to use legislative alerts to encourage its members to contact their Congressional representatives through phone calls and letters sent through Congress Web.

FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE

By Ann Bradford, senior government relations associate

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

The House and Senate have each passed their own versions of a faith-based initiative bill (H.R.7/S.476), yet they have not gone to conference on the bills because Senate Democrats fear that they will be shut out of conference negotiations. The Republican leadership in the Senate has pledged to include the Democrats in the negotiations process, but the House leadership has failed to make a similar promise.

Since it does not appear that these bills will be sent to conference before the 108th Congress adjourns, Senator Santorum (R-PA) has offered an amendment to the conference committee that is considering the corporate tax bill. This amendment would insert the language of H.R. 7 into the compromise bill. Unfortunately, this amendment does not include the temporary restoration of Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds. This restoration was included in S.476 but not H.R.7. A summary of H.R.7/S.476 is posted on the faith-based initiative issue page of the NASW Web site:
<https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/faith.asp>

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives continues to conduct forums across the country in an effort to educate faith-based and community organizations about how they can apply for funds from the federal government.

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 temporary restoration of SSBG funds. It appears that H.R.7 is the only bill that has a chance to pass as an amendment to another bill this year.

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 also partnered with the SSBG Funding Coalition in requesting that the conferees working on the corporate tax bill include SSBG funding in the final bill as part of the faith-based initiative amendment.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

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

Association Health Plans (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 HELP Committee considered the Small Business Health Fairness Act (S.545) this summer and began consideration of alternative legislation that would create a national uniform standard for small market health insurance plans. 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.naswdc.org/advocacy/updates/092704.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. NASW's lobbying efforts have included updating our grassroots membership to express opposition, contacting congressional

staff, and writing letters of opposition to both House and Senate offices. NASW 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. For more information, see NASW's Web site:

<http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/alerts/2003/101003a.asp>

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 on this issue in the 108th Congress. Currently, Congress will not act on 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 suspected 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. These include Senate leaders as well as leaders in the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus who are currently developing this legislation, which is expected to move next year. For more information, see NASW's Web site:

<http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/issues/health.asp>

Youth Suicide Prevention

Pushed by lawmakers who have experienced youth suicide within their own families, Congress hurriedly approved legislation in September to reduce suicide among young people. Known as the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act (S.2634), the bill was just completed and sent to the President for signature. The Act authorizes \$82 million for three-year grants to help states, tribes, colleges, and universities develop and expand early intervention and prevention services and to provide coordinated and appropriate mental health services to children and young adults. The bipartisan legislation also encourages better data sharing and dissemination of research on the most effective ways to reduce youth suicide. Funding for the new law will not appear until next year's appropriations cycle.

NASW ACTION

NASW worked with its coalition partners in the Mental Health Liaison Group to support passage of this bill. For more information, see NASW's Web site: <http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/updates/092704.asp>

SAMHSA Appropriations Moves Ahead

In late September, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the Labor/HHS spending bill (H.R.5006) supporting the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Among the new initiatives in the bill is a grant program to help states formulate collaborative plans to transform their fragmented public mental health systems. The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health recommended creation of the new program. The program is slated for \$44 million in the Senate bill, but just half that amount is in the House version. Other programs within SAMHSA, including its large mental health and substance abuse services block grants to states and communities, are funded with slight increases. Unlike many other HHS agencies, there are no program cuts within SAMHSA's budget. The House completed action on its version of the FY 2005 Labor/HHS Appropriations bill on September 9, but the Senate floor was not expected to act before the October pre-election adjournment.

NASW ACTION

NASW worked with its coalition partners in the Mental Health Liaison Group to support passage of this bill. For more information see NASW's Web site: <http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/updates/092704.asp>

Child Health Legislation

The Family Opportunity Act (S.622/H.R.1811) would allow families with incomes up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level to buy into Medicaid on a sliding-scale basis. The Senate passed the bill in May, and it has bipartisan support in the House. However, it is unclear whether congressional disagreement over the bill's financing will derail final passage. The Bush Administration has announced a new outreach campaign called "Cover the Kids," which will direct \$1 billion into efforts to reach more children who are eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP coverage. The campaign includes grants to states to expand enrollment outreach activities and envisions grants to faith-based and community organizations to help state offices enroll more low-income children with health coverage programs. Unfortunately, in the President's budget, this funding increase is offset with an equal cut in SCHIP funds to the states.

NASW ACTION

NASW worked with its coalition partners in the Consortium for Citizens With Disabilities to support passage of this bill. For more information see NASW's Web site: <http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/updates/092704.asp>

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 to receive mental health services. Eligible states would have laws or policies in effect to ensure that children receive appropriate mental health services so that parents do not have to relinquish legal custody of their children in order to obtain needed care. The program would assist states in establishing an infrastructure for interagency cooperation and cross system financing. It would also expand 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 lobbying for its support during the year. Working with a broad coalition of mental health and family advocacy organizations, NASW has made numerous visits to Hill offices in support of the bill and has helped to secure a number of key cosponsors.

Medicaid Spending

The Bush Administration continues to seek a method to cap federal expenditures for Medicaid. This year it has tried 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 authorize 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 place a cap on and block grant the program. NASW has continued to closely monitor activities and developments in the program. NASW is 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 suffered a blow with the tragic 2002 death of Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN) one of its primary proponents. Consequently, there has been less movement of mental health parity legislation in 2004; however, NASW and its coalition partners continue to support passage. Senate Republican leadership has urged lead sponsors Sen. Domenici (R-NM) and Kennedy (D-MA) to take up the bill early in 2005. 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.naswdc.org/advocacy/updates/092704.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 will release an alert calling for House action, if 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 the ranks of health professionals willing and able to serve this population. The country's increasingly diverse population drives this need for expansion of the health care workforce. These programs provide support for schools that have successfully demonstrated the greatest commitment to training students, particularly minorities, for careers in the health professions. Scholarship support is also 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 has tracked a recommendation working its way through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) approval process 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 will consider next year. For more information, see NASW's Web site: <http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/updates/092704.asp>

Respite Care

The Lifespan Respite Care Act (S.538/H.R.1083) authorizes competitive grants to states to identify, coordinate, and build federal, state, and community-based respite resources and funding streams. It would also support respite provider recruitment and training, caregiver training, and program evaluation. The Senate passed the bill last year, and the House bill has 134 cosponsors from both parties. The bill was recently incorporated into the "Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act," (S.2533/H.R.4595), providing a second avenue for passage. The Lifespan Respite Care Act is based on model systems in Oregon, Nebraska, Wisconsin and Oklahoma. House and Senate negotiators are currently working behind the scenes on an agreement to quickly pass the bill through the House.

NASW ACTION

NASW worked with its coalition partners in the Lifespan Respite Coalition to support passage of this bill.

LOAN FORGIVENESS

By Cynthia Woodside, senior government relations associate

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

As expected, no further action will be taken in this Congress 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). Since a new Congress (the 109th) will convene in January 2005, all bills will need to be reintroduced next year. Loan forgiveness will be considered when Congress deliberates on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

NASW ACTION

NASW continues to explore ways to build support for loan forgiveness as well as ways to make higher education more affordable for all social workers. The Association has developed a number of advocacy tools and is working with other national organizations to promote loan forgiveness for social workers and related professionals in child welfare and in schools. The Council on Social Work Education is assisting NASW in its efforts by adding questions on student loan debt to this year's survey of social work education programs.

Additional information is posted on the loan forgiveness advocacy page of the NASW Web site:

<http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/loanForgiveness.asp>

SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (SSBG)

By Ann Bradford, 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 settings possible. SSBG was funded at \$2.8 billion in 1996. However, its funding has since been cut by more than \$1 billion. SSBG funds were in danger of even further cuts this year when the House considered two budget process bills. If passed, these bills would have put a cap on the total amount of money spent on entitlement programs. Fortunately, the House did not pass these bills.

Both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees flat-funded SSBG this year at \$1.7 billion. Earlier this year, the Senate attempted to increase the funding level by including a temporary increase of funds in its charitable choice bill (CARE Act, S.476). The Senate addressed the massive cut by providing \$1.375 billion in new funding for SSBG. However, the companion bill in the House, H.R.7, did not include the additional funding. Unfortunately, the Senate and House have not gone to conference on these bills due to the concern of Senate Democrats that they would not have been fully included in the negotiation process. NASW hoped that a faith-based initiative amendment offered to the corporate tax bill would include the language of S.476. Instead, the language of H.R.7 was offered. Therefore, it appears that any chance of having SSBG funds increased this year is now gone. Additional information about SSBG funds and the CARE Act can be found on the faith-based initiative issue page on NASW's Web site:

<http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/issues/faith.asp>

NASW ACTION

NASW strongly supported attempts to increase funding for SSBG. Therefore, NASW continued 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 to the program. The lobbying effort included signing on to letters being sent to Capitol Hill and the Administration by the SSBG Coalition. The efforts also included the Association's letter to the Senate corporate tax bill conferees asking them to support the inclusion of SSBG funds in the final bill as part of the faith-based initiative amendment.

WELFARE

By Cynthia Woodside, senior government relations associate

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

Just in the nick of time, Congress approved the eighth extension of the 1996 welfare law, which was set to expire on September 30, 2004. On the 30th, both chambers approved a six-month extension of current law that will run through March 31, 2005. Prior to passage in the Senate, Senators Rick Santorum (R-PA) and

Evan Bayh (D-IN) attempted, but failed, to add \$200 million in funding for marriage promotion and \$100 million for fatherhood programs. No major policy changes were included in the extension.

NASW ACTION

Despite the slim chance for final action on welfare this year, throughout the quarter NASW continued to build 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.

In a September 22, 2004 Action Alert, the Association asked members to urge their Senators to oppose the Santorum-Bayh marriage-fatherhood proposal and support a "clean" extension.

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

In this quarter, 386 individuals sent 1,508 letters and or e-mails through Congress Web to their representatives. The issues that generated the most grassroots efforts included loan forgiveness, the Federal Marriage Amendment, Child Welfare: Title IV-E Training, judicial nominations, and funding for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program.

Presentations

On September 23, Lawrence Moore presented on Legislative, Political, and Electoral Process Engagement for Social Workers at Howard University School of Social Work.

On September 10, Lawrence Moore served as a panelist for the 2004 Health Disparities and Wellness Brain Trust at the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Meeting.

On September 9, Dina Zarrella presented activities of the Office of Government Relations and Political Action to four new Chapter Executive Directors during their orientation.

On August 3, Cynthia Woodside presented the results of NASW's Child Welfare Survey to 50 people attending the IASWR-NASW Symposium: Workforce and Accountability: Child and Family Services Reviews-Implications for Child Welfare Practice.

Legislative Advocacy Network

As of September 30 2004, 2,634 individuals subscribe to the Legislative Advocacy Network Listserv.

The issues 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](#) to stay abreast of federal legislative activities that pertain to social workers and their clients.

Voter Registration

NASW has run an aggressive voter registration campaign during this quarter. In the past, our online voter registration program, Election Impact, was lightly used. During this quarter, 1,954 individuals used this program to register to vote. Compared to the first six months of the year, that is an eight-fold jump with usage growing each month. In August, our site was the eighth busiest site Election Impact runs.

In July and August, the front page of the NASW's web site highlighted Election Impact. Staff re-sent a 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 once they returned from summer break.

In coalition with America Votes, NASW recruited members and social work students to participate in voter registration activities for the September 18 National Women's Election Action Day.

NASW also promoted the Democratic National Committee Women's Vote Center Take Five project. This project encourages individuals to adopt five women voters to ensure they are registered and make it to the polls on November 2.

Voter Registration is a large component of the Political Action Field Organizer program, which is described in more detail in the Political Action section of this report.

Web Site Development

Five action alerts and six updates have been posted to the association's 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 on NASW's Web site:

www.socialworkers.org/advocacy

Staff updated the PACE page to comply with new FEC guidelines barring membership-based political action committees from expressly advocating the success or defeat of endorsed candidates to non-members. Therefore, a number of the pages on the PACE page are now password-protected.

Newly endorsed candidates for federal election were added to the Web site. Staff wrote and posted an activity report of the 2003-2004 ANSWER coalition program year.

POLITICAL ACTION FOR CANDIDATE ELECTION (PACE)

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

With contributions from Dina L. Zarrella, senior field organizer

Democratic & Republican National Conventions

NASW's President, Gary Bailey, attended the Democratic National Convention in Boston, MA, in July. He met with many of the more than 60 social worker delegates that PACE staff had identified.

Arrangements were also made through the Republican National Committee for Bailey to attend several key events at the Republican National Convention in New York City; even a floor pass was secured for him to attend the convention at Madison Square Garden. However, due to a hospitalization, he was unable to attend the convention.

Voter Identification of NASW's Membership

For the first time in history, PACE had access to voter registration information on NASW members. PACE staff bumped or enhanced NASW's membership list against a database of national voter registration files. Voter registration files are public records. The match rate for NASW's membership list was approximately sixty-five percent. This means that PACE now has voter registration information on two-thirds of NASW's national membership. PACE transmitted individual data files to chapters in early August, along with information about how to interpret the files and how to encourage unregistered members to become registered.

2004 Congressional Endorsements and Contributions

The national PACE Board of Trustees had a busy summer formally endorsing and contributing to federal candidates. They met over a teleconference call on August 13, 2004 and in person, in Washington, DC September 11-12, 2004. During these meetings the Trustees authorized contributions totaling \$29,500 to six house incumbents and 18 challengers; and they authorized endorsements to 104 house incumbents and eight challengers.

Fundraisers

Government Relations staff attended fundraisers for 10 House incumbents, and 1 for a House challenger. They also attended fundraisers for five Senate incumbents, and five Senate challengers. In addition, they attended three donor council events sponsored by organizations such as the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and The Republican Main Street Partnership, including the President's Dinner.

Field Organizers

A PACE training for field organizers was held at the National office in Washington, DC July 16-18, 2004. The training was a tremendous success. Since then, the organizers from 10 states: Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Nevada, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, and

Washington have been working very hard mobilizing members across the country to become politically active. The projects in South Carolina and South Dakota are funded by a generous donation from the DC Metro PACE.

Specifically, the organizers have been holding voter registration drives, encouraging members to volunteer for campaigns, operating phone banks to mobilize the social work vote, and visiting social work schools through out their state to speak to policy classes about the importance of voting and the election. Organizers will be working in their respective chapters through November 5.

2004 Federal Electoral Activity: New Rules

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) issued many new rules and has re-interpreted old rules in the context of the new campaign finance reform law. These new rules affect Association activities around federal campaigns and candidates. PACE staff has written an article for the Bridge, Chapter Service's electronic newsletter, noting the changes and held several conference calls for chapter staff to discuss the material published in the Bridge and to answer any questions about the new FEC rules.

Social Workers for Kerry-Edwards Buttons

NASW-PACE created and distributed 25,000 Social Workers for Kerry-Edwards buttons to members through chapters. Members have been very receptive to and excited about these buttons as a way to show their support for Kerry-Edwards and their affiliation with NASW.