



December 19, 2017

Legislative Activities:

Congress is working frenziedly on passing the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which would produce a windfall for the “super rich,” while decimating safety-net programs that serve low-income elderly, children, and families. The House and Senate both passed versions of the bill and reached a conference agreement on a single bill, with final vote expected before year-end. NASW wrote a statement opposing the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and issued an [action alert](#) asking individuals to contact their members of Congress to oppose the conference agreement.

NASW has joined other members of the Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls Globally to welcome the introduction of the International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) in the Senate (S. 2120). IVAWA makes ending violence against women and girls a top diplomatic, development, and foreign assistance priority by ensuring the U.S. government has a strategy to efficiently and effectively coordinate existing cross-governmental efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence globally. S.2120 empowers the U.S. to work with other countries toward preventing violence against women and girls and responding to the effects of these practices on societies and economies.

NASW staff continues to work a Senate companion bill to ***H.R. 1290-Improving Access to Mental Health Act***. Currently, ***H.R.1290, the Improving Access to Mental Health Act*** has [14 cosponsors](#). For more information on the bill please visit our website [here](#).

To continue building bipartisan cosponsors for ***H.R. 1484 the Social Worker Safety Act of 2017***, NASW posted an [action alert](#). NASW needs your continued advocacy to gain more cosponsors to this vital piece of legislation. A full list of current cosponsors for H.R. 1484 can be found [here](#).

NASW continues to push for support for [H.R. 1289, Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr., Social Work Reinvestment Act](#), which currently has **19 cosponsors**.

NASW belongs to the **Behavioral Health Information Technology (IT) Coalition**, which is working to secure passage of the [Improving Access to Behavioral Health Technology Act \(H.R. 3331/S. 1732\)](#). It currently has **six bipartisan cosponsors** in the House and **three bipartisan cosponsors** in the Senate. The legislation would create a Center for Medicare and Medicaid (CMMI) nationwide demonstration authorizing incentives to psychiatric hospitals, Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs), social workers, clinical psychologists and outpatient and inpatient addiction providers to obtain health IT.

In a recent meeting of the Behavioral Health IT Coalition, staff learned good news that there is a potential for the bills to move with the health extenders package – or be considered on the Unanimous Consent Calendar in the U.S. Senate sometime in early 2018. Stay tuned.

The **Clean Budget Coalition** focuses on eliminating or limiting “poison pill” riders to the federal budget that tend to lead to significant cuts in essential safety-net program. NASW social justice staff joined coalition member in a visit to Senator McCaskill’s (D-MO) office to lobby for protection of safety net programs in the 2018 budget.

NASW staff joined members of the **National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths** on hill visits to discuss implementation of some recommendations of the Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities. We met with staff of the Senate Finance Committee; Chairman Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Ranking Member Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR); as well as staff to Sen. Todd Young (R-IN).

Get involved! You can join [NASW’s Advocacy Listserv](#) to stay up-to-date on Congressional activity. We also have [resources](#) on our web page to help in setting up visits with your members of Congress. For best practices on Congressional outreach, check out the [Indivisible Guide](#).

Administrative Activities

NASW is preparing comments on the **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s review of Noninvasive, Nonpharmacological Treatment for Chronic Pain**. Comments are due by December 26th.

Mel Wilson, NASW Manager of Social Justice and Human Rights, was named to the **Board of Directors for the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC)**. The appointment fills a board seat reserved for the social work profession. NCCHC is a national accreditation organization that develops health care and behavioral health care standard for many of the nation’s jails and prisons. The NASW representative will serve on the NCCHC’s Policy and Standards Committee.

NASW continues to advocate on behalf of transgender older adults: Despite [advocacy from NASW and other stakeholders](#), data collection on gender identity was excluded, yet again, in the federal government's [proposed version of the National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants \(NSOAAP\)](#). The NSOAAP yields important data that improves social service delivery to older adults in home and community settings. [Read NASW’s comments](#) urging the Administration for Community Living to enable transgender older adults to self-identify in the 2019 NSOAAP.

NASW submits comments to the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation: In November 2017, NASW **submitted comments** regarding the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation's **proposed new direction**. Among other topics, the association encouraged the Innovation Center to incorporate social work in team-based care models and to evaluate staffing patterns within such models.

Collaborative Activities

On December 14, NASW staff participated in a call with other national social work groups to discuss collaborations and partnerships.

As a part of a series of NASW voting rights and voter participation webinars, NASW hosted a webinar titled *Challenges for Voting Rights in America*. The webinar co-presenters were Hilary O. Shelton – the Senior Vice President for Advocacy for the NAACP and Nicole-Austin Hillery – Director and Counsel, Washington, DC Office for the Brennan Center for Justice.

Coalition Activities:

NASW has disseminated **important ACA Open Enrollment information** and posted weekly reminders about Open Enrollment on social media sites. NASW continues to work in the **Families USA Protect Our Care Coalition** to advance access to health care.

On November 9, NASW social justice staff participated in a coalition meeting with the **Americans for Tax Fairness Coalition**. The meeting allowed coalition leadership to discuss and become informed about the inequities in the proposed Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, a bill many economic justice advocates oppose. The meeting was an effort to galvanize members to issue statements, contact members of Congress, and participate in protest rallies in an effort to defeat the proposed tax bill. NASW has been vocal in its opposition to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, as written.

On November 10, NASW staff attended the weekly **Judicial Nominations Coalition** meeting. There is continued concern that President Trump has nominated many candidates to fill vacant federal judgeships that are marginally qualified and/or hold viewpoints that are contrary to progressive social justice and civil rights. At the time of the meeting, there were five nominees to the Federal Courts of Appeals that the coalition were concerned about and are mobilizing to defeat.

On November 15, NASW staff attended the regularly scheduled **Voting Rights Task Force** meeting. The meeting covered the need to begin mobilization for the upcoming mid-term national elections. The meeting followed-up on an earlier meeting dealing with the lack of transparency of the Pence-Kobach Voter Integrity Commission that is supposedly identifying “massive voter fraud” in the 2016 elections.

On November 16, NASW staff joined in on a **Protecting Immigrant Families Campaign Field Call**, which is a quarterly national call of advocates that are concerned about the health and well-being of documented and undocumented immigrant families. The primary focus is on child-welfare issues. NASW has long been a partner with this coalition and continues to contribute to their advocacy and calls to action.

On November 30, NASW staff participated in the regularly scheduled **Immigration Task Force Meeting** to discuss efforts to pass a “clean” Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) bill before the March 2018 deadline.

On December 7, NASW staff attended the **American Psychiatric Association Congressional Briefing** on the topic of improving the physical health of patients with serious mental illness and advancing integrated care.

On December 14, NASW staff participated in the **STOP Obesity Alliance Membership Meeting** to discuss coalition activities and the Obesity Competencies Project.

NASW staff participated in a **Smart Decarceration Conference** held at the University of Chicago. This two-day conference discussed the role of social work in developing criminal justice policy and improving criminal justice social work practice and is an extension of the Grand Challenges initiative. NASW is a co-chair of the newly formed Decarceration Policy Work Group.

Convening of the Collateral Consequences

A collateral consequence is an issue of great concern for social workers who have low-income clients that have recently been released from incarceration. The goal of this conversation was to develop a subgroup (of the Reentry Working Group) that can collaborate and provide direct support around efforts to eliminate collateral consequences. The group began its work flesh out collateral consequence work being done across issues, identify short term goals and strategies, and identify opportunities for collaboration.

NASW staff co-convened the monthly **Drug Policy Working Group**. The working group is a part of the Justice Roundtable coalition that includes over 50 organizations dealing with criminal and juvenile justice reforms and advocacy. NASW is a co-chair of the working group. The major agenda items included discussing the current opioid crisis and determining the role of the Drug Policy Working Group in articulating our policy position on managing the opioid crisis.

The Drug Policy Working group also encouraged members to sign-on to a letter of concern related to the human rights violations in the Philippines’ drug trafficking policies that include summary execution of both traffickers as well as those addicted to drugs.

NASW participated in coalition work with:

- Leadership Council of Aging Organizations
- Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- Coalition on Human Needs
- Mental Health Liaison Group
- National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths
- National Child Abuse Coalition
- Protect Our Care Coalition
- Medicaid Coalition
- Eldercare Workforce Alliance
- Elder Justice Coalition

Support Letters:

NASW has signed onto a number of letters of support. You can find a list of letters of support on our [web page](#). A sample of recent letters is listed below.

- [NASW signs on to open letter urging House and Senate appropriators to reverse proposed funding cuts to the Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program \(SHIP\) for fiscal year 2018 \(12/7/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto letter to Congress urging them to tend to unfinished business before the holiday break \(12/6/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging Senate Majority and Minority leaders to repeal the Medicare Independent Payment Advisory Board \(11/30/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging House and Senate appropriators to reverse proposed funding cuts to the Senior Community Service Employment Program \(SCSEP\) for fiscal year 2018 \(11/29/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto women's community letter to Congress opposing the Tax Bill \(11/29/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto letter to Congress supporting the Preventive Health Savings Act \(11/28/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto letter to Congress seeking to raise budget caps to help fund education \(11/28/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto MHLG letter opposing provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act \(11/17/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto letter praising introduction of the International Violence Against Women Act \(11/14/2017\)](#)

NASW has also submitted its own comments to the Administration and Congress. You can find this list on our [web page](#) as well.

- [NASW submits comments to the Administration for Community Living advocating for inclusion of data collection on gender identity within the proposed National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants for 2019 \(Nov. 27, 2017\)](#)
- [NASW submits comments to the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation regarding the center's proposed new direction \(Nov. 17, 2017\)](#)