



May 10, 2017

Legislative Activities:

NASW staff have continued to work on introducing a companion bill to ***H.R. 1290-Improving Access to Mental Health Act*** in the Senate. Currently, ***H.R.1290, the Improving Access to Mental Health Act*** has 13 cosponsors. A full list of cosponsors can be found [here](#). For more information on ***H.R. 1290, the Improving Access to Mental Health Act*** please visit our website [here](#).

NASW continues to work with our congressional champions to gain support for both [H.R. 1289, Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr., Social Work Reinvestment Act](#) and [H.R.1484 - Social Worker Safety Act of 2017](#). In addition, NASW staff has been working with Senate offices in the hope of finding original cosponsors to introduce the companion bills in the Senate.

Congress finalized the FY 2017 spending bills, funding the federal government through September 30th, 2017 and was signed by the President on May 5th. Congress is now preparing to begin work on the **FY 2018 spending bills**. NASW is tracking the budget process and has participated in hill visits with the Strengthening America's Values and Economy for All Campaign to advocate for FY18 funding essential to the social work profession. The President's comprehensive budget is expected to be unveiled mid-month. NASW will continue to update you as budgetary milestones are reached.

On Thursday, May 4, 2017, The U.S. House of Representatives passed ***H.R. 1628, the American Health Care Act*** by a partisan vote of 217-213. The bill included new amendments that were fashioned to appeal to both conservative and moderate members of the Republican majority. The Senate will likely create its own bill, which, if passed, will have to be conferenced with the House-passed bill, H.R.1628. NASW sent out an Action Alert to the Advocacy Listserv opposing the bill in advance of the House vote. NASW also put out a [statement](#) about the bill following passage.

Social Justice staff was invited to attend and participate in an important briefing that coincided with commemorating the success of the **Second Chance Act**. You can learn more about the Second Chance Act at the [Council of State Governments' Justice Center web site](#). The featured remarks were led by Gov. Dannel Malloy (D-CT) and Neera Tanden, President, Center for American Progress. A panel discussion covered issues related to supporting Second Chance Month. The panel discussed a call to action to get progressive and conservative lawmakers alike to implement reforms to the U.S. criminal justice system to provide better and fairer rehabilitation, remove barriers to re-entry, and ensure that individuals are able to move on with their lives with a fair shot to make a decent living. They also made the point that States have been leading the charge on reforms, which are not only shown to reduce recidivism and crime but have allowed individuals with criminal records to become productive members of society.

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. You may want to check out the information on the [Indivisible Guide](#). It is a guide created by former Congressional staffers to reveal best practices for making Congress listen.

Administrative Activities:

Top Mental Health Appointments

The Trump Administration named its choice for the first ever Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Elinore McCance-Katz. Dr. McCance-Katz was previously the chief medical officer at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) from 2013-2015. She now serves in the same role at Rhode Island's behavioral health department. Dr. McCance-Katz is a psychiatrist.

The new position, which was created by last year's 21st Century Cures Act, will oversee SAMHSA and coordinate the nation's mental health and substance abuse treatment programs at other agencies throughout the federal government.

The Trump administration will also nominate pediatrician Dr. Brett Giroir as HHS Assistant Secretary for Health. Dr. Giroir, a former CEO of the Texas A&M Health Science Center, was most recently named president and CEO of ViraCyte, a biopharmaceutical company, in November.

Federal Appointment at ONDCP

The Trump Administration designated Richard Baum to serve as Acting Director of National Drug Control Policy until a permanent Director is nominated and confirmed by the Senate.

Acting Director Baum has served in a variety of roles at the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) for two decades and through four presidential administrations. He has a broad range of experience on domestic and international drug control policy issues, including leading the development of key strategic documents such as the National Drug Control Strategy. Most recently, as Chief of the International Division at ONDCP, he was a part of the United States Delegation to the meeting of the United Nations' Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna, Austria.

Acting Director Baum is replacing Kemp Chester, who was appointed as Acting Director on Inauguration.

Judicial Activities:

The **Judicial Nominations Coalition** meets weekly to discuss and mobilize around federal judiciary issues. There was a special ongoing campaign concerning the nomination of Judge Gorsuch to the Supreme Court. The Judicial Nominations Coalition meeting for the last week in April covered a “post-mortem” discussion about Judge Gorsuch being confirmed to serve on the Supreme Court. NASW Social Justice and Advocacy staff is active with this coalition.

The **Supreme Court** ruled on April 26, 2017 that school districts must go the extra mile to **accommodate students with disabilities** in a unanimous decision that could dramatically expand the rights of special education students. The ruling is a major victory for special education advocacy groups. The higher standard has been endorsed by the Obama administration, more than 100 current and former Democratic members of Congress and a host of special education advocates. However, school officials have warned that imposing higher standards could be prohibitively expensive.

Coalition Activities:

NASW Social Justice staff participated the monthly **Justice Roundtable Reentry Working Group** meeting. NASW has a leadership role within the working group and was responsible for reporting on and leading the discussion on how Medicaid and the dismantling of the Affordable Care Act impacted justice involved men and women. The working group meeting also discussed and planned actions to support pending legislation such as the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act, the Second Chance Act and the Redeem Act, among others.

NASW Social Justice staff attended and participated in the monthly “Brown Bag” planning group meeting convened by the **National Criminal Justice Association**. The guest speakers were Peter Hyun, counsel for Senate Judiciary Committee ranking member Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Lara Quint, counsel for Crime Subcommittee ranking member Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). The key topics were the Judiciary Committee’s agenda for the coming year as it relates to criminal justice issues.

NASW Social Justice staff attended and participated in the **Justice Roundtable’s Quarterly Assembly**. The featured speakers included Amy Baron-Evans, Sentencing Resource Counsel Federal Public and Community Defenders, who will discuss Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch’s record on criminal justice; and Ryan King and Leigh Courtney from the Urban Institute will share findings from a soon-to-be released report on long-term incarceration titled “A Matter of Time: the Causes and Consequences of Long Prison Sentences in America.” NASW staff also reported out about activities that various Justice Roundtable working group completed related to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) changes.

NASW social justice staff participated in the monthly **Law Enforcement Working Group**. The major issues for discussion were the anticipated changes in policy and practices within law enforcement as a result of the appointment of Attorney General Sessions. The group developed preliminary plans to respond to law enforcement policy changes that impact the community policing and related areas.

As a member of the **Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA)**, NASW contributed to two recently released issue briefs advocating for federal action to strengthen the eldercare workforce: one outlining [funding recommendations for Fiscal Year 2018](#) and another addressing [policies to support family caregivers of](#)

older adults. EWA has also created a [toolkit](#) to help advocates educate policymakers about the critical role of the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program in strengthening the eldercare workforce.

NASW staff attended **Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids Coalition** meeting to discuss FY17 appropriations for tobacco control & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Office on Smoking & Health budget.

NASW staff discussed with **Center on Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** staff collaborating on the distribution of health care and health promotion material from the Department of Health and Human Services and CMS.

NASW staff attended a **National Coalition on Health Care** briefing on April 10 discussing the implications of Medicaid per capita cap proposals.

NASW staff attended a **Bipartisan Policy Center** briefing on April 18 about patient treatment options and comparative effectiveness research at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute and the Veteran's Administration.

NASW staff attended a **National Women's Law Center** briefing on April 20 to review proposed Medicaid changes and implications for women's health services.

NASW staff attended the **Child Welfare League of America's** conference which featured a Policy Seminar that addressed key issues such as the Affordable Care Act and immigration and how proposed legislative changes will affect families and children.

NASW Social Justice staff is a regular member and participant in the **Drug Policy Working Group**. The April meeting covered:

1. Transition to Trump Administration
 - a. Rich Baum, Acting ONDCP Director
 - b. Governor Christie's Appointment to head the Opioids+ Commission
 - c. Possible Drug Czar nominees
2. Domestic Policy Issues
 - a. National Drug Control Strategy and transition document
 - b. Drug/Opioid appropriations
 - c. Attorney General Sessions' War on Drugs

As a regular member of the **SaveOurRetirement coalition** Social Justice staff participated in the monthly conference call to discuss the crisis of economic injustices related to major racial and income disparities for those nearing or entering into retirement. The major topic of discussion centered on changing fiduciary rules for fees charged by financial institutions that are exorbitant.

NASW social justice staff was invited to and participated in a National Women's Law Center, National Partnership for Women & Families, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and OUR Walmart special policy and communications briefing on **Resist: Fighting Back for Women and Families in the Age of Trump**. This briefing will cover the basics of key family friendly policies – like equal pay, child care and paid family and medical leave – and provide communications guidance to help advocates

fight for strong policies that will truly help support working families. NASW will remain involved with this coalition.

In addition, 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
- Eldercare Workforce Alliance
- National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging

Internal Efforts:

NASW staff created a Practice Perspective on [Implementing Smoking Cessation into your Social Work Practice](#).

NASW staff created a [Medicaid Financing Practice Alert](#).

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 letter in support of WIC funding request \(05/05/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to Save Medicaid in the Schools Coalition Letter to Congressional Leadership Urging a No Vote on the American Health Care Act \(05/02/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to MHLG Letter Opposing the MacArthur Amendment and the American Health Care Act \(05/02/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to MHLG Letter Supporting CHIP Extension \(04/28/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to letter in support of the Preventive Health Savings Act \(04/12/2017\)](#)
- [NASW joins 50 groups in letter to House and Senate Appropriations Committee leaders asking them to reject any tobacco policy riders and reject the proposed 50% cut to the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health budget \(04/11/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs letter in response to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services Request for Information on Pediatric Alternative Payment Model Concepts \(04/07/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging Congress to reject the Administration's proposed cut to funding for the Senior Community Service Employment Program \(SCSEP\) in fiscal years 2017 and 2018 \(04/05/2017\)](#)

- NASW signs onto letter requesting \$5 million allocation for Screening and Treatment for Maternal Mental Depression. (04/03/2017)
- NASW joins nearly 60 social justice organizations in urging Attorney General Sessions to preserve the Department of Justice Smart on Crime Guidance and related Policies. (3/31/2017)
- NASW signs on to letter to oppose the FDA Deeming Authority Clarification Act of 2017, which would exempt some tobacco products from FDA review.(03/27/2017)
- NASW signs on to Leadership Council of Aging Organizations letter opposing legislation that would increase age rating of health insurance premiums (3/20/2017)

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