House’s Plans for FY 2018 After Recess

Upon return from August recess, Congress will face the September 30 deadline to pass a Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 federal spending package. The House Rules Committee unveiled text of an eight-bill minibus, including the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill that the House marked up and passed in July. The Congressional Budget Office released their cost estimate of the measure. Nondefense discretionary spending is estimated at $511 billion, which is about $4 billion under the sequestered cap. However, the overall spending bill exceeds the cap when combined with base discretionary defense spending, which provides for an estimated $621 billion, $72 billion above the FY 2018 Budget Control Act’s sequestered cap of $549 billion. If the overall spending bill exceeds the cap, the Office of Management and Budget would have to implement across the board cuts. To increase the cap on discretionary spending, a bipartisan budget deal is required. The eight-bill minibus is scheduled for consideration in the House during the first week of September.

AACN Submits Comments to CMS on QPP Proposed Rule

On August 21, AACN submitted public comments in response to the proposed rule Medicare Program: CY 2018 Updates to the Quality Payment Program issued on June 30 by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The proposed rule would update the Quality Payment Program (QPP) based on stakeholder input to ensure continual improvement of the program. The Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) established the QPP to allow eligible clinicians to participate via one of two tracks: Advanced Alternative Payment Models, or Merit-based Incentive Payment System. AACN applauded the identification of APRNs as QPP eligible providers and outlined three recommendations to help drive a more innovative, resource-effective healthcare system: provider neutral language, accurate provider attestation, and education opportunities for new clinicians.

SPS Grassroots Ambassadors Influencing Change in Texas, South Carolina

AACN’s 2017 Student Policy Summit Grassroots Student Ambassadors Prize encouraged students to build upon the skills learned at the Summit in March. The prize has been awarded to two students who engaged their peers in an advocacy campaign. The 2017 Ambassadors, Kelsey Mumford (top left) and Kerri Nelson (bottom left), were chosen from a multitude of applicants due to their unique and distinct proposals. Kelsey mobilized her peers to campaign for Texas House Bill 1938, which would create an opt-out organ donation system in the state. Kerri has taken on the role of South Carolina’s State Ambassador in Advocacy through the Rare Action Network to raise awareness and help lead visits to the state capitol to discuss House Bill 3323. AACN thanks the contributors to the Seventh Edition of the award-winning book, Policy and Politics in Nursing and Health Care, the editors of the book, Diana J. Mason, Frieda Outlaw, Deborah Gardner, Eileen O’Grady, and its publisher, Elsevier, for sponsoring this prize. AACN applauds the two winners for their outstanding advocacy efforts! View full summaries of their projects here.