An Update from Tom Menighan, CEO of APhA

The August Congressional Recess Doesn't Stop Our Advocacy Efforts

As Congress begins a week-long recess in honor of Memorial Day and Members return home, we thought an update was in order regarding the latest information on our ongoing federal provider status efforts. Involvement from you as constituents has been essential to our profession’s advocacy efforts and hope you will continue to engage with your congressional members, especially when they are in their districts. It is our collective strength and determination that has helped us gain recognition for patient access to pharmacist-provided services and the important role you play in patient care.

We continue to gain co-sponsors and support for H.R. 592/S. 109, the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act, with 272 Representatives and 53 Senators supporting our bill to date. However, there are headwinds. We are in an election year so Congress’ time to consider legislation is shortened. Given Members’ focus on the federal debt and spending and the truncated congressional calendar, there may not be specific legislation moving forward this year to advance pharmacists’ provider status in Medicare.

One health care topic that the U.S. House and Senate have expressed a commitment to address this year is opioids. Accordingly, APhA and the Patient Access to Pharmacists’ Care Coalition (PAPCC) are focusing our advocacy efforts on highlighting pharmacists’ services related to substance use disorder and treatment. As you know, the use and impact of medications, including opioids, are optimized when pharmacists are a part of the care team. We expect Congress to pass an opioid-related legislative package in 2018. But any such legislation will likely exclude measures that have a significant budget implication. Therefore, despite our productive work with congressional leadership regarding H.R. 592/S. 109, the potential fiscal impact of our legislation could be a barrier to passage, and possible inclusion in any opioid-related legislation.

While the future of our federal legislation during this Congress is uncertain, that does not mean we stop fighting. It means that have a lot more to do. APhA will continue to support a multi-level approach to advance patient access to and coverage of pharmacists’ patient care services and you are essential to our effort. We urge you to continue talking to your Members of Congress, state legislators and policymakers, patients and other providers about the value you provide. Share your stories on social media, or contact us and we’ll help you get involved.

APhA is in this for the long haul and we need you to be in it as well. Real change can only happen when we are all committed.