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To view Vice President Jim's and the other panelists' testimonies, as well as a video of the hearing, click [here](#).

NIHB Legislative Alert: Ask Congress to Sign On to a Support Letter for SDPI

Established in 1997 for the prevention and treatment of diabetes in American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs), the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) is expiring at the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2013. As Congress begins to consider reauthorizing this life-saving program, broad-based support from Representatives and Senators is crucial. Members in each chamber are circulating bipartisan support letters for SDPI and its sister program, the Special Diabetes Program, which provides research dollars for type-1 diabetes. The support letters will be open until the end of March.

To ensure uninterrupted funding for both programs, Congress must pass reauthorization legislation this year. Please call your Representative and Senators, and ask them to add their names to these letters. To view more information on the legislative alert, including the House and Senate support letters, click [here](#).

On March 7th, NIHB hosted a Tribal briefing and Caucus in order to prepare Tribal Leaders to

NIHB UPDATES

NIHB Board Member Rex Lee Jim Testifies at House Subcommittee Oversight Hearing

On March 6th, NIHB At-Large Member and Navajo Area Representative, Vice President Rex Lee Jim of the Navajo Nation, testified before the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs during its oversight hearing on the, "Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Request of the Indian Health Service (IHS) and of the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians." NIHB's testimony focused on the differences between the President's FY 2013 budget request for IHS and the recommendations developed by the IHS Budget Formulation Workgroup. Other witnesses included IHS Director, Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, and Michael F. Singer, Acting Principal Deputy Special Trustee in the U.S. Department of the Interior on a federal panel. In addition to President Jim, the Tribal panel featured Jefferson Keel, President of the National Congress of



advocate for the continuation of SDPI. Each Tribe will receive a special letter from NIHB summarizing the meeting and asking for input on reauthorization request levels. For more information on this meeting and SDPI reauthorization, please contact Liz Malerba, Legislative Assistant, at Lmalerba@nihb.org.

HILL UPDATES

Two House Committees Approve IPAB Repeal, Full House Vote Scheduled

A key provision in the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Medicare cost-cutting panel, known as the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB), was repealed by voice vote during two full committee mark-ups in the House last week. The 15-member panel of IPAB would be responsible for identifying savings in Medicare if program costs grow faster than a specified rate. The group would be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

H.R. 452, the *Medicare Decisions Accountability Act of 2011*, passed the both the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Ways and Means Committee easily with just voice votes. While the majority of the bill's 234 co-sponsors are Republican, it does have 20 Democratic co-sponsors.

Republicans maintain that the panel has the ability to ration care, while the Administration and a majority of Democrats continue to stand behind it as a way to control costs. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the repeal would add \$3.1 billion to the federal deficit over the next 10 years.

House Leadership is reportedly planning a full House vote on H.R. 452 during the week of March 19th, which coincides with the 2nd anniversary of the signing of the ACA and is one week before Supreme Court hears oral arguments on the constitutionality of various provisions in the ACA.

A Senate companion bill, S. 2118, has been introduced by Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX), but does not currently have Majority support.

ADMINISTRATION UPDATES

HHS Releases Final Rule Establishing Affordable Insurance Exchanges

On March 12th, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced policies to assist states in building Affordable Insurance Exchanges. Starting in 2014, these one-stop marketplaces will allow consumers and small businesses to choose a private health insurance plan and offer the public the same kinds of insurance choices as members of Congress.

The policies released today will help states in designing their Exchanges to best meet the needs of their consumers. They offer states substantial flexibility as they design a marketplace that works for their residents.

The policies provide states with the guidance and certainty they need as they continue to work to build these marketplaces for their residents for operation in 2014. The policies offer guidance about the options on how to structure Exchanges in two key areas:

- Setting standards for establishing Exchanges, setting up a Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP), performing the basic functions of an Exchange, and certifying health plans for participation in the Exchange;
- Establishing a streamlined, web-based system for consumers to apply for and enroll in qualified health plans and insurance affordability programs.

The final rule builds on the flexibility and resources provided by HHS already to build state-based Exchanges. A majority of states have taken significant steps in building Exchanges. Previously, HHS awarded 49 states and the District of Columbia \$50 million to begin planning their Exchanges, and as announced



recently, 33 states and the District of Columbia have received over \$667 million in Establishment Grants to begin building their Exchanges.

This announcement builds on over two years' worth of work with states, small businesses, consumers, and health insurance plans. The administration examined models of Exchanges; convened numerous meetings and regional listening sessions across the country with stakeholders; and consulted closely with state leaders, consumer advocates, employers and insurers. To finalize the rules, HHS accepted public comment over 75 days to learn from states, consumers, and other stakeholders on how the rules could be improved, and HHS modified the proposals based on feedback from the American people.

To view the final rules, click [here](#).

To view the regulatory impact analysis, click [here](#).

For more information on the final rules, visit: <http://www.healthcare.gov/news/factsheets/2011/07/exchanges07112011a.html>

For more information on Exchanges, including fact sheets, visit <http://www.healthcare.gov/exchanges>.

HHS Hosts Tribal Budget Consultation

On March 7-9 in Washington, DC, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) hosted its annual consultation on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Budget for Tribal programs within its operating divisions. Tribes heard from the HHS Secretary, Kathleen Sebelius, as well as top officials from HHS agencies including, the Indian Health Service (IHS), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Tribal leaders also had the opportunity to provide comments on issues of concern within the budget.

The IHS Budget Formulation Workgroup presented its recommendations for the FY 2014 IHS Budget to HHS on March 9th. Chairman Gary Hayes of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and

Vice President Rex Lee Jim of the Navajo Nation spoke on behalf of the Workgroup. The Workgroup is co-chaired by Vice President Jim, as well as Councilman Andy Joseph of the Confederated Colville Tribes, and Carolyn Crowder of the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association Inc. The Workgroup's testimony can be found [here](#).

VA/IHS Consultation Scheduled

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)/Indian Health Service (IHS) are initiating consultation to facilitate VA reimbursement for services provided by IHS and Tribal health facilities to Eligible American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans. Comments are due in 30 days from the date of the letter and an in person session will be held at the IHS Tribal Consultation Summit scheduled for March 13-14, 2012.

Click [here](#) to read the "Dear Tribal Leader Letter"

Click [here](#) to read a summary of the draft agreement between the IHS and the VA.

IHS 2012 Tribal Consultation Summit March 13-14

The Indian Health Service (IHS) will hold its 2012 Tribal Consultation Summit on March 13-14th at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel in Arlington, VA. Click [here](#) for a draft agenda. For more information, click [here](#).

ACA helps 1.3 million minority young adults obtain health insurance

New data released March 7th by Health and Human Services shows that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has extended health insurance to a substantial number of racial and ethnic minorities nationwide. The ACA allows young adults to stay on their parents' insurance plans through age 26.

The data, based on combined estimates from the National Health Interview Survey and the Current Population Survey, indicate that approximately



736,000 Latinos, 410,000 Blacks, 97,000 Asian Americans, and 29,000 American Indian/Alaska Natives have gained coverage because of the law.

Highlighted in an HHS issue brief, the data coincides with a research letter also published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

For more information about this topic, please see the HHS Issue Brief at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2012/YoungAdultsbyGroup/ib.shtml>

For more information about the JAMA research article, please visit <http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/307/9/913.extract>

Reminder: Comments Due this Week on IHS LTC Consultation and HRSA Consultation

On January 6th, Indian Health Service (IHS) Director, Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, released a “Dear Tribal Leader Letter” requesting consultation on implementation of the long-term care provisions in the recent permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act included as a part of the Affordable Care Act.

Comments are due by Friday, March 16, 2012.

[Key Definitions: Long-Term Care and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act](#)

[Long-Term Care in Indian Country: New Opportunities and New Ideas](#)

[Dr. Roubideaux writes to Tribal Leaders to initiate a consultation on implementing long-term care provisions arising from the Indian Health Care Improvement Reauthorization and Extension Act of 2009 \(IHCIA\)](#)

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has distributed a pre-decisional, draft Tribal Consultation Policy for comment. HRSA will be accepting comments through **March 16, 2012** at AIANhealth@hrsa.gov.

Click [here](#) to read a “Dear Tribal Leader” Letter and the draft policy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

IHS CONSULTATION SUMMIT

DATES: MARCH 13-14

LOCATION: RENAISSANCE ARLINGTON
CAPITAL VIEW HOTEL
2800 SOUTH POTOMAC AVE
ARLINGTON, VA 22202

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES, “AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE PUBLIC WITNESS” HEARINGS

DATES: MARCH 27-28

LOCATION: B-308 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

You are cordially invited to attend
**National Indian Health Board's
29th ANNUAL CONSUMER
CONFERENCE**
*Celebrating
NIHB'S 40th Anniversary*

**September 24- 28, 2012
DENVER, COLORADO**

Save the Date


Tribal Health Reform: National Training on the Affordable Care Act and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act

Hosted by NCAI and NIHB
through support of the National Indian Health Outreach and Education (NIHOE) partnership with the Indian Health Service

**Mystic Lake Casino
Prior Lake, MN
April 18-19, 2012**



Save the Date
May 30, 31 & June 1, 2012
**National Tribal Public
Health Summit**
Hard Rock Cafe & Casino
TULSA, OKLAHOMA



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http://www.nihb.org/legislative/washington_report.php

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