

National Indian Health Board



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EFFORTS TO REAUTHORIZE THE INDIAN HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT IN THIS 110TH CONGRESS ARE SHUT DOWN

During this past week, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) worked tirelessly to have the House take up H.R. 1328, a bill to reauthorize and amend the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA). The NIHB pursued several legislative strategies but at the 11th hour our efforts were shut down because Congress could not find funding to pay for the bill. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has scored the bill at \$9 million for the first year, \$53 million over five years, and \$129 million over ten years. Yet, Congress was able to find \$700 billion dollars to “bail out” Wall Street??

Last week the NIHB attempted to have the bill included in the Continuing Resolution (CR) passed by the House on September 24th and the Senate on September 27th. Unfortunately, the House Leadership decided to put forward a “clean” CR, funding federal agencies through March 6, 2009 and providing for appropriation increases for specific programs, such as low-income energy assistance, low-income food programs, and school loans.

This past weekend, the NIHB tried to move Title II of H.R. 1328 as a stand alone bill. Title II contains amendments to the Social Security Act to improve American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) access to Medicare, Medicaid and State Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Title II includes those provisions of the bill that result in increases in direct spending attributable to the Medicaid cost-sharing and Medicaid managed care exemptions. Unfortunately, House Leadership was not able to fund the first five years of the bill in an amount of \$53 million.

The NIHB will continue to pursue legislative strategies during the remainder of the 110th Congress. The \$700 billion “bailout” legislation failed to pass the House on September 29th and Congress will return on Thursday, October 2, 2008 to continue work on this agreement. In addition, it is possible that Congress could return for a post-election, lame duck session in November.

On September 23 – 25th, the NIHB celebrated its 25th Annual Consumer Conference. Our theme was: *Unite for Health: Advocate Out Loud!* We want to thank all of you who “advocated out loud” for passage of the IHCIA: our national Indian organizations [NCAI, NCUIH, NIGA, NAIHC], Area Indian Health Boards, national health organizations, church groups, friends of Indian health, tribal consulting firms, tribal chairmen, and especially, all those individual tribal members who made the calls and visits to Congress to tell their stories of why the passage of the IHCIA is so important to our tribal communities.

Please direct media inquiries to Caitlin Wesaw, Communications Coordinator at the National Indian Health Board.

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