

# Federal & State Legislative Update

## The Connecticut Association for Home Care & Hospice

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## U.S. Senate Health Reform Advances

The Senate overcame a crucial test vote earlier this morning, voting to close off debate on Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's "Manager's Amendment." This will be the first of three votes designed to pass health care reform in the Senate before Christmas.

The 60 votes in favor of the motion to close debate, the minimum needed, represented a major victory for Democrats, now clearly in reach of passing legislation extending health coverage to nearly all Americans. The legislation would make health insurance mandatory for the first time for nearly everyone, provide subsidies to help lower-income people buy it and induce employers to provide it with tax breaks for small businesses and penalties for larger ones.

Two more procedural votes await the Senate, each requiring 60 votes. The first is set for Tuesday morning, with the final vote, requiring a simple majority for passage, preliminarily scheduled for 7pm on Christmas Eve.

Items of particular interest to CAHCH are:

### Revisions to Home Health Care and Hospice Provisions

- Rebasement of the Medicare PPS Rates pushed back one year from 2013 to 2014.
- Medicare Demonstration Project based on results of the home health agency costs study involving providing ongoing access of care to low-income Medicare beneficiaries. Up to \$500 million is provided for additional payments from 2015 to 2019.
- Market Basket Reduction for Home Health Agencies formerly at (-1) reduction for 2011 & 2012, now at (-1) for 2013 as well.
- Hospice Care Market Basket Reduction scaled back from 0.5 to 0.3, minimizing the impact to patients and families before the cuts are enacted in 2013.

Other policy information CAHCH members should remain aware of include increased incentives for states regarding rebalancing long term care patients out of institutions to home and community based programs.

CAHCH continues to analyze the implications of Health Care Reform and will pass information on developments to members as it becomes available. Follow CAHCH on Facebook and Twitter or check the [Breaking News](#) tab under Featured Links from the CAHCH [website](#) for updates.

## Special Session Plans Disclosed

Lawmakers will return to the Capitol Monday afternoon to try and resolve Connecticut's budget deficit.

Sources close to legislative officials say the Democratic majority will attempt to reduce the shortfall by close to \$112 million. Connecticut's deficit currently stands at \$467 million.

An advanced copy obtained by CAHCH reveals significant line items including:

- \$16.6 million in Program Reductions Requiring Legislation
- \$23.1 million in Fund Sweeps
- \$70.6 million in other revenue items requiring Legislative Approval, the bulk of which is created by delaying the change in estate tax laws.

CAHCH is pleased to report information at this point indicates there are no reductions planned for social services items, outside of a relatively vulnerable population study and potential rate adjustment. The Secretary of HHS is required to report on access to home health care by low income Medicare beneficiaries by March 1, 2014. The secretary is also authorized to conduct a four year demonstration project beginning in 2015 to test the effects of payment changes on access to care by low income beneficiaries.

CAHCH is working closely with our lobbyist from Rome, Smith & Lutz to monitor developments in these ongoing discussions and will pass information on to members as it becomes available.

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