



National Health Reform Timeline for State Advocacy Work

As Congress continues to move forward on national health reform, Community Catalyst is looking ahead to identify some of the major opportunities for advocacy in which state partners can share their important perspective in the national debate. The following scenarios are meant to provide state advocates with an idea of the possible timelines for these upcoming opportunities.

April Recap

The Senate Finance Committee is currently holding sessions to debate, discuss, and conduct “mini-mark ups” for three key issue areas: delivery system reform, coverage, and financing. On April 21, the Committee began this process by holding the roundtable discussion on delivery system reform. The resulting policy options were laid out in a [document](#) by the Committee and [summarized](#) by Community Catalyst. The closed-door mark-up was held by the Committee on April 29.

Also on April 29, Congress passed its \$3.5 trillion federal budget, which allows health reform to be paid for in 11 years and includes a plan that would allow for the use of budget reconciliation if a bipartisan agreement can not be reached by mid-October. (*See page 5 for more on this process.*)

Scenario I: A Vote in Both Chambers by August

The [five major committees](#) with jurisdiction over health reform legislation have laid out a timeline for having a vote on health reform legislation in both the House and Senate prior to the August Congressional recess (which begins on August 1 for the House and August 8th for the Senate).

As outlined above, the Senate Finance Committee is currently researching and debating three key issue areas dealing with national health reform. These sessions are leading to policy papers and legislative language for a Senate Finance Committee bill. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) committee is simultaneously developing language for its own bill. On April 19, Senator Baucus, chairman of Senate Finance, and Senator Kennedy, chairman of Senate HELP, [wrote a joint letter to President Obama](#), outlining their planned timeframe, which includes a June vote in each committee on their similar bills. These bills will then be merged into one piece of legislation and brought to the Senate floor.

There is also a similar timeline by the three committees of jurisdiction in the House (Ways & Means, Education & Labor, and Energy & Commerce). They are working simultaneously to develop language, to be voted on separately in each committee, and will eventually bring a health reform bill to the House floor.

Each of these committees of jurisdiction in both the Senate and the House expressed an overall goal to hold a vote on a health reform bill in both the House and the Senate before the August recess. According to this timeline, we anticipate the following dates and activities to be crucial to state advocacy around health reform.

May

Congress	Memorial Day recess (May 23-31)
	Senate Finance Committee Sessions: <i>Coverage</i> (begins 5/5)
	Senate Finance Committee Sessions: <i>Financing</i> (begins 5/12)
State Advocacy Opportunities	Relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff
	Targeted outreach to Members of Congress as key issues arise
	Memorial Day recess events or meetings (see Community Catalyst guide)
	Planning and preparation for larger July recess events or meetings
	Outreach to local media on key issues through editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc

June

Congress	Anticipated release of health care bills (“Mark”) from Senate committees (Finance and Health, Education, Labor & Pensions)
State Advocacy Opportunities	Reaction to committee legislation from state groups through meetings and calls with Members and through local media outreach (meetings with editorial boards, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc)
	Continued prep for July recess events and meetings
	Continued relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff

July

Congress	July 4th recess (June 27 - July 5)
	Anticipated release of health care bills from House committees (Energy & Commerce, Education & Labor, and Ways & Means)
	Debate on health reform legislation on House and Senate floors
State Advocacy Opportunities	Large-scale health care advocacy events in states prior to Congressional vote
	Extensive outreach to Members of Congress during floor debate
	When possible, Washington, DC visits by state advocates to meet with Members of Congress prior to vote
	Continued relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff
	Outreach to local media on key issues through editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc

August

Congress	August recess Senate (August 8 – September 7) House (August 1 – September 7)
	Anticipated vote on health care legislation
State Advocacy Opportunities	Extensive outreach to Members of Congress prior to vote (meetings, calls, Hill visits, events, etc)
	When possible, Washington, DC visits by state advocates to meet with Members of Congress during the first week of the month, prior to vote
	Continued relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff
	Outreach to local media on key issues through editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc

September

Congress	Return from recess on September 8
	Conference Committee meets to reconcile differences between House and Senate bills
	Possible vote on compromise bill
State Advocacy Opportunities	Extensive outreach to Conferees (meetings, calls, Hill visits, events, etc)
	Continued push from state advocates to Members of Congress to weigh in with leadership (meetings, calls, Hill visits, events, etc)
	When possible, Washington, DC visits by state advocates to meet with Members of Congress prior to final floor vote on compromise bill
	Continued relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff
	Outreach to local media on key issues through editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc

Scenario II: Floor Votes Post-August Recess

It is important to plan for the possibility that Congress’s stated timeline isn’t reached. If Congress does not pass bills in the House and Senate by August recess, there is an alternative scenario.

The final budget resolution, passed by Congress on April 29, includes language providing Congress with the option to utilize the budget reconciliation process to pass health reform legislation if a bipartisan agreement has not been reached by **October 15**. Budget reconciliation is a practice by which legislation is passed through the budget process and only requires a fifty-one vote simple majority in the Senate. (*For more information, see [this summary](#) by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.*) In the event that an agreement isn’t reached by the October 15 deadline, this date will become critical. According to *this* timeline, we anticipate the following dates and activities to be crucial to state advocacy around health reform.

May

Congress	Memorial Day recess (May 23-31)
	Senate Finance Committee Sessions: <i>Coverage</i> (begins 5/5)
	Senate Finance Committee Sessions: <i>Financing</i> (begins 5/12)
State Advocacy Opportunities	Relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff
	Targeted outreach to Members of Congress as key issues arise
	Memorial Day recess events or meetings (see Community Catalyst guide)
	Planning and preparation for larger August recess events or meetings
	Outreach to local media on key issues through editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc

June

Congress	Anticipated release of health care bills (“Mark”) from Senate committees (Finance and Health, Education, Labor & Pensions)
State Advocacy Opportunities	Reaction to committee legislation from state groups through meetings and calls with Members and through local media outreach (meetings with editorial boards, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc)
	Continued relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff
	Continued prep for August recess events and meetings

July

Congress	July 4th recess (June 27 - July 5)
	Anticipated release of health care bills from House committees (Energy & Commerce, Education & Labor, and Ways & Means)
	Debate on health reform legislation begins on House and Senate floors
State Advocacy Opportunities	Extensive outreach to Members of Congress during floor debate (meetings, calls, Hill visits, events, etc)
	Continued relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff
	Continued prep for August recess events and meetings
	Outreach to local media on key issues through editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc

August

Congress	August recess Senate (August 8 – September 7) House (August 1 – September 7)
	Continued debate on health reform legislation on House and Senate floors
State Advocacy Opportunities	Large-scale health care advocacy events in states prior to Congressional vote
	Extensive outreach to Members of Congress during floor debate (meetings, calls, Hill visits, events, etc)
	Continued relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff
	Outreach to local media on key issues through editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc

September

Congress	Return from recess on September 8
	Possible vote on health care legislation
State Advocacy Opportunities	Extensive outreach to Members of Congress prior to vote (meetings, calls, Hill visits, events, etc)
	When possible, Washington, DC visits by state advocates to meet with Members of Congress prior to vote
	Continued relationship building with Members of Congress and health staff
	Outreach to local media on key issues through editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc

October

Congress	October 15 deadline for bipartisan agreement – possible use of budget reconciliation process
State Advocacy Opportunities	Extensive outreach to Members of Congress prior to vote (meetings, calls, Hill visits, events, etc)
	When possible, Washington, DC visits by state advocates to meet with Members of Congress prior to vote
	Outreach to local media on key issues through editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc