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***The Critical Care News Summary is an update from the Roundtable on Critical Care Policy. For further information on the Roundtable, please visit our website at [www.CriticalCareRoundtable.org](http://www.CriticalCareRoundtable.org).***

## **Roundtable News**

The Roundtable submitted a statement for the record for a December 15<sup>th</sup> Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee hearing entitled “Prescription Drug Shortages: Examining a Public Health Concern and Potential Solutions.” The Roundtable’s Outcomes & Innovation Working Group conducted an analysis of the Food and Drug Administration’s current drug shortage list, determining that ICUs currently face shortages of [at least 30 generic drugs](#) that are commonly used to care for critically ill and injured patients (see attached appendix for a list). As detailed in the statement submitted by the Roundtable’s Executive Director, “The lives of ICU patients depend on having access to an array of critical care medications --drugs to regulate a patient’s breathing, maintain a heart beat or prevent life-threatening infections, to name a few. Drug shortages of any of these vital medications may jeopardize health outcomes and threaten patient safety, and while we recognize the importance of access to all drugs for all patients, particularly those with terminal conditions, we wish to remind the Committee that shortages of some critical care drugs, such as those typically used to treat cardiac or respiratory arrest, may carry immediate life and death consequences.” You can view the full statement [here](#).

## **Capitol Hill Events and Updates**

### **Congress Approves Temporary Extension of Payroll Tax Cut & Doc Fix**

This morning, the House of Representatives approved a Senate proposal to extend the temporary payroll tax break. The House officially rejected the Senate-passed bill on Tuesday, but after three days of intense pressure from the White House, the Senate, and the media, House Republican leaders agreed to accept the Senate proposal. The Senate followed the House action and approved the measure which now awaits the President’s signature. The slightly amended bill provides a two-month extension of the temporary payroll tax break and unemployment insurance, and provides a two month fix for the 27% cut in Medicare physician payments set to go into effect on January 1st (known as the “doc fix”). The bill’s \$33 billion cost was paid for by rate increases on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The House had previously approved their own proposal which included a one-year extension on the tax measures and a one percent payment increase in Medicare physician payments for 2012 and 2013; however, the House bill also included some controversial offsets including cuts to hospitals. Under the most recent agreement, the House approved the measure contingent that when Congress returns in January, the Senate will appoint members to a conference committee to negotiate legislation to extend both benefits through 2012. For more information, please click [here](#).

## News and Reports

### [Trust for America's Health Report: "Ready or Not? Protecting The Public's Health From Diseases, Disasters, And Bioterrorism"](#)

Roundtable partner organization Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) released a new report, *Ready or Not? Protecting The Public's Health From Diseases, Disasters, And Bioterrorism*. *Ready or Not?* finds that key programs that detect and respond to bioterrorism, new disease outbreaks and natural or accidental disasters are at risk due to federal and state budget cuts. This year, we looked at the impact that cuts have had so far, in combination with upcoming budgets and have found that we are at risk for losing even our most basic capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters. To view the full report, please click [here](#). For questions, please contact Dara Lieberman at [dlieberman@tfah.org](mailto:dlieberman@tfah.org).

#### Related Articles

### ["U.S. disaster readiness at risk, report warns," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, December 20, 2011](#)

A disturbing report released Tuesday on America's readiness to respond to disease outbreaks, natural disasters or acts of bioterrorism says federal budget cuts affecting all levels of government have put the nation at risk. Preparedness was on an upward trajectory after the Sept. 11 and anthrax attacks, but the nation's economic crisis is "eroding a decade's worth of progress," according to the ninth annual report from the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.