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PAHPA Reauthorization Introduced in Senate

Today, the Senate introduced its version of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA) Reauthorization of 2011. The legislation—spearheaded by the bipartisan efforts of Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions (HELP) Committee members, Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA), Ranking Member Michael Enzi (R-WY), Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC) and Sen. Bob Casey (R-PA)—makes several important changes to streamline the federal government’s disaster planning, particularly in regards to medical countermeasures.

As you’ll recall, in July the House Energy and Commerce Committee passed their version of the PAHPA reauthorization (H.R. 2405), which included key Roundtable-endorsed provisions that would prioritize critical care within the federal government’s medical preparedness goals, and improve resource awareness before, during and after an incident. More specifically, H.R. 2405 would add the critical care system to the National Health Security Strategy’s medical preparedness goals, thereby ensuring that critical care is included in federal, state and local planning efforts to increase preparedness for public health emergencies. It would also require the inclusion of medical surge capacity in the periodic evaluation of the nation’s preparedness capabilities, enabling an efficient and effective medical response during an emergency. This legislation is still pending in the House and awaits floor action before the end of the year.

Last week, Roundtable staff was invited to attend an off-the-record stakeholder briefing led by the offices of the bipartisan group of Senators for an update and overview of the Senate’s efforts to reauthorize the law. During the briefing, Senate staff emphasized that today’s bill introduction was only the first step in a long process, and they are still open to input from those in the room. As such, the Roundtable has sent a letter to these offices, requesting that the Senate incorporate the provisions endorsed by the Roundtable included in the House bill. In the coming weeks, the Roundtable will continue to seek opportunities to ensure that these provisions are included in the legislation, which Senate staff indicated they would like to mark-up in early December. The Roundtable will be reaching out to other Members of the HELP Committee—several of whom we met with during the Roundtable’s October 5th Congressional Outreach Day and who indicated a willingness to work with our organization on our PAHPA efforts—to garner their support for including these critical care provisions in the legislation.

The Roundtable on Critical Care Policy applauds the efforts of the HELP Committee and the leadership of Senators Harkin, Enzi, Burr and Casey for working in a bipartisan manner. We hope that as they continue working to augment our federal disaster preparedness efforts, they consider further improving the reauthorization legislation by incorporating these key enhancements to the National Health Security Strategy.

We will continue to keep you posted on the Roundtable’s efforts.

This Special Alert is an update from The Roundtable on Critical Care Policy. For further information on the Roundtable, please visit our website at www.CriticalCareRoundtable.org.