



805 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 650 | Washington, DC 20005 | (202) 466-8700  
[www.CriticalCareRoundtable.org](http://www.CriticalCareRoundtable.org)

***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).***

## Capitol Hill Events and Updates

Today, Democrats rejected a \$640 billion deficit deal by Republicans on the grounds that it lacked adequate tax revenue, leaving the Super Committee with no clear path to compromise before the rapidly approaching Thanksgiving deadline. The proposed \$640 billion in savings would have come primarily through cuts to domestic agency budgets, a pay freeze and bigger pension contributions for federal workers, cuts in farm subsidies and an array of other spending cuts and revenue raisers; Republican leadership aides said Democrats immediately rejected it. Today's proposal was the latest in a series offered by both sides in hopes of reaching a compromise. For more information, please click [here](#).

As you'll recall, the Budget Control Act of 2011 created a 12-member Commission made up of equal numbers of House and Senate Democrats and Republicans. The Commission is charged with putting together a plan to reduce the deficit over the next ten years. If it is successful, then the President is authorized to submit an increase in the debt limit sufficient to give the federal government borrowing authority past the 2012 elections. If it fails, or comes up short, then across-the-board cuts would take place beginning January 1, 2013. The remaining timeline for the Super Committee's deliberations is as follows:

- November 23 -- Issue Recommendations
- December 23 -- Full Congress to Consider Recommendations

Members of the deficit cutting panel will continue to negotiate through the weekend if they can't come to an agreement today to cut \$1.2 trillion in deficit reduction over the next decade.

## Federal Activity

The Supreme Court has announced that it will review President Barack Obama's health reform law, setting the stage for a showdown over his signature legislative accomplishment months ahead of the 2012 election. Oral arguments are expected to take place sometime this spring. For more information, please click [here](#).

### Department of Health and Human Services

On Monday, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that up to \$1 billion will be awarded to projects across the country over the next 3 years to test creative ways to deliver high quality medical care and save money. Funded by the Affordable Care Act, the *Health Care Innovation*

*Challenge* will award grants in March 2012 to applicants who will implement the most compelling new ideas on ways to achieve better health, improved care, and lower costs for beneficiaries of Medicare, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program. In awarding grants, preference will be given to projects that rapidly hire, train and deploy health care workers, as well as those serving beneficiaries with the highest health care needs. The grant program will be administered by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, a component of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Applications are open to providers, payers, local government, and community-based organizations, with emphasis on public-private partnerships and multi-payer approaches. Each grantee project will be monitored and evaluated for measurable improvements in quality of care and savings generated. For more information, please click [here](#).

## News and Reports

### [“Doctors Value Quality, Not Quantity, at Life's End, Poll Shows,” \*The National Journal\*, November 15, 2011](#)

The results of the latest poll in the “Living Well at the End of Life” series conducted by the *National Journal* and The Regence Foundation were released earlier this week. The results of the poll showed that, though doctors nearly universally agree that helping patients die without pain is a more important goal than doing everything possible to prolong their lives, many say it can be tough to talk to patients about palliative care.

### [“Savings by the Bundle,” \(opinion\) \*New York Times\*, November 16, 2011](#)

NIH bioethicist Zeke Emanuel (currently on detail as a Special Advisor for Health Policy to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget) writes that although the U.S. spends more than \$8,000 per person per year for health care, that money is not evenly distributed. Half the population — mostly young people and healthy adults — consumes just 3 percent of costs, while the sickest 10 percent consumes 64 percent. Emanuel asserts that real cost control requires changing the way we care for these high-cost patients with multiple chronic conditions, and bundled payments are the best ways to catalyze that change.