

California Restores MCH State Funding

The California Chapters led an effort to restore \$2.6 million to the State's FY 01-02 Budget for Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services. Funding had been eliminated in August by executive order. Had the cut been allowed to go into effect, vital county programs such as the Black Infant Health program would have been discontinued and the loss of federal matching dollars could have resulted in their reduction or elimination of other MCH services.

Working under tight legislative time constraints, the California Chapters secured the support of Assemblywoman Helen Thomson

(D) who authored legislation to restore the funding; urged state legislators (including members of the Women's Caucus) to support the legislation; and, rallied public support through various means including extensive media coverage. Volunteers and staff worked to ensure that legislators and the public were made aware that funding for these programs affects every district. As a result of the campaign, Governor Gray Davis (D) restored \$2 million of the \$2.6 million initially cut. The \$2 million in state dollars will generate \$6 million in funding for the state's MCH services because of a generous federal match rate.

The *Advocacy Update* delivers legislative news about March of Dimes issues on a monthly basis.

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Labor/HHS Appropriation Bill Moves to Conference Committee

The bill that appropriates funds for the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and related agencies has moved to a House-Senate conference committee. Among the agencies whose funding is included in this bill are the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes for Health (NIH), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The House and Senate bills differ in the levels of funding proposed for each of the agencies followed most closely by the March of Dimes (see chart on page 2). As this *Advocacy Update* goes to press, the Foun-

dation is leading a 22 organization coalition that is working to obtain the approval of the Senate funding increase of \$18 million for the new Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the CDC.

While members of the conference committee have not yet officially met, staff is working on a compromise. Senate conferees include: Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), Judd Gregg (R-N.H.), Larry Craig (R-Idaho), Tim Hutchison (R-Ark.), Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Mike DeWine (R-Ohio), Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.), Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Harry Reid (D-

Nev.), Herb Kohl (D-Minn.), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Mary Landrieu (D-La.), Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.). House conferees are: Ralph Regula (R-Ohio), Bill Young (R-Fla.), Ernest Istook (R-Okla.), Dan Miller (R-Fla.), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Anne Meagher Northup (R-Ky.), Randy Cunningham (R-Calif.), Kay Granger (R-Texas), John Peterson (R-Penn.), Don Sherwood (R-Penn.), David Obey (D-Wis.), Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.), Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-Ill.), and Patrick Kennedy (D-R.I.).



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March of Dimes Federal Funding Priorities FY 2002 (Dollars in Millions)

Program	FY 2001 Funding	President's Budget	House Report 107-229	Senate Report 107-84	March of Dimes Recommendation FY 2002
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Total)	4,046	3,878	4,077	4,419	---
Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities	70	76	80	88	93.5
Immunization	552	575	599	637	664
Polio Eradication (CDC Activities)	91.4	NA	NA	NA	106.4
National Institutes of Health (Total)	20,300	22,564	22,564	23,695	23,700
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development	976	1,096	1,088	1,123	1,137
National Human Genome Research Institute	382	426	423	440	445
National Center on Minority Health Disparities	130	158	157	158	151
Health Resources and Services Administration (Total)	5,525	4,982	5,691	5,518	---
Maternal and Child Health Block Grant	714	709	740	719	850
Healthy Start	90	90	102	90	90
Consolidated Health Centers	1,164	1,288	1,318	1,343	1,344
Newborn Hearing Screening	8	7	10	10	12.5

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¹ The House of Representatives passed the Labor/HHS Appropriations bill (HR 3061) on October 11, 2001 by a vote of 373 to 43.

² The Senate passed the Labor/HHS Appropriations bill (S 1536) on November 6, 2001 by vote of 89 to 10.

³ A specific funding level for polio eradication efforts at CDC is not provided until the House and Senate Conference Report is written.

New Data on Employer-Sponsored Insurance

As policy makers continue to explore ways to improve access to private coverage for the uninsured, the scope of benefits available under employer-based health plans remains an issue. Changes in law that impact small firms are of particular interest to the March of Dimes because, under existing law, coverage is less likely to be offered in small firms and if offered, more likely to be limited in scope.

To learn more about current practices in the scope of benefits in small employer plans, the March of Dimes contracted with William M. Mercer, Inc., to add questions to the Mercer/Foster Higgins National Survey of employer-sponsored Health Plans. William M. Mercer, Inc., is an international strategic and operational human resource con-

sulting firm. The *National Survey of Employer-sponsored Health Plans* is the largest and most comprehensive survey on the subject. Established in 1986 by Foster Higgins (which merged with Mercer in 1997), the survey has become the industry standard used by employers around the country. The government, the media, and the health care industry also depend on the survey for authoritative information on benefit plans and the employer perspective on health care issues.

On behalf of the March of Dimes, questions related to maternity benefits were asked of employers with fewer than 500 employees. The survey was fielded in the summer of 2000 and the data analysis was done in the spring and sum-

mer of 2001.

Among the findings are the following: about 160 million Americans are covered by employer-based health insurance plans; the majority of plans cover prenatal care and delivery; however, a significant percentage of plans restrict maternity coverage or omit altogether services important to the health of pregnant women and newborns.

A summary of the findings can be found at March of Dimes website www.modimes.org titled "New Information on Maternity benefits in Small Employer Health Plans"

November 2001 is the last issue for the year. Thanks for a successful year.

From the March of Dimes Data Book for Policy Makers...

What percentage of toddlers in your state are up to date on their polio vaccine?

This fact—and more—is found in the 2001 Data Book.

SCHIP Expansion Bill Gains Co-Sponsors

March of Dimes staff and volunteers attending the Foundation's Public Affairs and Volunteer Leadership Conferences visited members of Congress and urged support of legislation to cover income-eligible pregnant women age 19 and older through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). As a result of commitments made by the Members during these meetings, the House bill now has 40 co-sponsors, more than double the number of Members

who co-sponsored a similar bill last year.

On a related issue, Colorado Gov. Bill Owens (R) announced his intention to apply for a federal waiver to expand Colorado's SCHIP program to cover this group of women. Gov. Owens' statement demonstrates once again that states are interested in making this change in SCHIP programs, even when it requires using the cumbersome waiver process.