

RMAC/NRLN Health Care Advisory Committee (HCAC) Meeting Report for December 12th 2008

Attendees:

John Kotson—IBM Retiree; RMAC Chairman
Hazel Floyd—AUSWR Regional Vice President, HCAC member
Ed Bettinardi—Johns Manville Retiree; HCAC Chairman
Barbara Wilcox—AUSWR Health Care Specialist; HCAC Member
Harvey Hoffman—AUSWR CWA Representative

Ken DeBey—Colorado Alliance of Retired Americans (CARA) Board Member
Jerry Pifer—Community Liaison Staffer for Congressman Ed Perlmutter

National

1. Discussion of RMAC/HCAC Relationships
 - a. Decision was made to continue operation as we have; one combined meeting
 - b. Ed Bettinardi will continue to interface with NRLN
 - c. John Kotson will continue to publish one combined meeting report

2. Review of the Health Care Summit Meeting conducted December 5th by HHS Secretary Tom Daschle and Colorado Senator Ken Salazar
 - a. Health Care reform legislation is now being worked on in 2 committees; Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) and Finance. Could be effective in 2010.
 - b. People can keep employer sponsored insurance or select one of the Federal Employee Health Benefits Programs (FEHBP)
 - c. Major issue is should health insurance be mandatory for all Americans.
 - d. Daschle wants simplified bill; concepts rather than details.
 - e. Unclear how Senator Kennedy's health care subcommittee fits into the program.
 - f. Piper Su and Betty Sweeney of Salazar's staff were important meeting participants.
 - g. Ed Bettinardi submitted 2 questions; How does Medicare/Medicaid relate to new plan and can we add catastrophic coverage to Medicare?

3. Status of Medicare Catastrophic Coverage effort
 - a. John Kotson will continue contacts with Senator Mike Enzi's Washington staff; Enzi is ranking member on the HELP committee.
 - b. Much of the progress made with Senator Salazar's staff may be lost; Salazar has been selected as the new Secretary of the Interior.
 - c. The feeling among RMAC/HCAC members is that Medicare Catastrophic Coverage must be addressed by Daschle's health care reform legislation. There probably won't be another health care bill for a long time.
 - d. Ed Bettinardi will try to clarify what the committees are and what they are doing on Health care; also which ones we should try to interface with.

Colorado

1. John Kotson suggested that everyone should try to obtain feedback from all of the congressional staff members that we have briefed on the need for Medicare Catastrophic Coverage.
2. Status of contacts with Colorado Representatives;
 - a. Congresswoman Betsy Markey—John Kotson has had E-mail exchanges with the congresswoman on Medicare Catastrophic Coverage. Her response has been lukewarm. Consensus is we shouldn't expect too much from a new legislator.
 - b. Senator Ken Salazar—Hazel Floyd will invite Betty Sweeney, Salazar's community liaison staffer, to our next meeting.
 - c. Senator Mark Udall—Joe Halpern reported no progress. Udall's staff member, Jack Waldorf, was unable to attend this meeting, but would like to attend in January. He asked to be informed of our activities.
 - d. Congressman Jared Polis—Hazel asked AUSWR member John Rommelfanger to be our contact. John Kotson subsequently talked to Rommelfanger and he will attend next monthly meeting.
 - e. Congressman John Salazar; now member of the House Appropriations Committee—Harvey Hoffman will call Dwayne and Gail Watford, Grand Junction, to ask them to be our interface with the Congressman.
 - f. Congressman Mike Coffman—Ed Bettinardi has been trying to interface with him. So far he doesn't have an office and no one answers the phones. Ed will keep trying.
 - g. Congresswoman Dianna DeGette—Harvey Hoffman will try to schedule a teleconference with DeGette's Washington staff on January 9th. He will try to set up a meeting with DeGette during the congressional spring break.
 - h. Congressman Ed Perlmutter—Jerry Pifer attended our meeting on invitation of Hazel Floyd.
3. Meeting with Jerry Pifer, Congressman Ed Perlmutter's community liaison person
 - a. Stated that paper on Medicare Catastrophic Coverage was a great paper; was sent to Washington staff. She will provide us feedback by next meeting.
 - b. We expressed concern that any new health care plan will exclude persons on Medicare based on past experience. Present Medicare doesn't pay all doctor bills. Many doctors are not accepting new Medicare patients and are charging the difference between what Medicare pays and their normal billing.
 - c. She stated there will only be one health care bill, will go to committees which will make changes. At that time she will advise us when to write letters on Medicare.
 - d. We should meet with all three new congressional representatives; Markey, Polis and Coffman. They will vote on any new health care legislation.
 - e. Jerry will provide information on how the various health care efforts will mesh together by our next meeting.

- f. Stated we should hold an Obama meeting on health care. The Obama people will send a representative to take down ideas. Requested that John Kotson supply her with feedback on a meeting he was attending in Fort Collins.
 - g. Ed Bettinardi asked Jerry to define where we should aim our Medicare efforts for maximum effectiveness.
4. Discussion on new potential RMAC members. Ken Debey said that either he or Bob Knapp will attend our future meetings.
 5. Both Ed Bettinardi and Joe Halpern will be attending the NRLN BOD meeting in January. The next RMAC/NRLN Health Care Advisory Committee meeting will be January 9th 2009.

Thanks to all that attended the meeting. A lot of information is gathered at these meetings, particularly the ones that have congressional staffers attending.

John Kotson; RMAC Chairman