



American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science
Voice, Value, Vision

Government Affairs Committee (GAC)
e-newsletter
Issue #3 – February 2010

One of the strategic goals of our committee for 2009-2010 is to improve communication to the broader ASCLS membership and to provide a more consistent face to our members, in keeping with President Mary Ann McLane's "provide the face" initiative. The GAC e-newsletter will also be available on the *ASCLS Advocates for You* section of the ASCLS website for your convenience.

In this issue...

- What options exist for health care reform?
- ASCLS/CLMA/ASCP/AMT Legislative Symposium

Health Care Reform Update

With the January 19 election of Republican Scott Brown to fill the open Senate seat in Massachusetts, the already precarious 60-40 Democratic majority in the Senate has been demolished. This leaves the future of health care reform very much in question. The book *Game Change* has received a lot of attention in Washington in recent weeks, and this election was definitely a game changer. Brown gives Senate Republicans 41 votes, enough to filibuster the bill, which would prevent any final vote indefinitely.

The ASCLS Government Affairs Committee has been tracking the congressional process for health care reform and working closely with our Legislative Consultant Don Lavanty and Executive Vice President Elissa Passiment to make sure we can provide the appropriate information and direction to our members. In addition, we have been providing direction to Elissa and Don as they work with the Clinical Laboratory Coalition to communicate our issues to members of Congress.

At this time we, feel that things are so uncertain that we can best serve the ASCLS members by providing as many facts as possible. The facts are there are three options for Congress at the moment:

- The House can pass the Senate bill, which could then go to President Obama without another Senate vote. Outstanding issues would then be worked on during 2010 in a reconciliation process.
- The Senate can vote on the compromise bill as is before Mr. Brown is seated (he should be seated by February 3rd) or could actually delay the seating of Senator-elect Brown. Both Senate Leaders and President Obama have decided that this should not be the direction.
- Congress could go back and try to modify the bills to get buy in from moderate Republicans. In the case of the Senate, that probably means going back to the Finance Committee bill and working with Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe to get a bill that they would support.

A possible 4th, but very unlikely, option would be to “split the bill. The House could pass the money portions of the bill separately. In the Senate, this only requires a simple majority of 51 votes, not 60. However, they would still need to pass the policy aspects of the Senate bill as-is. This is not considered to be a serious option.

These are the current facts and we believe it is best, at this time, to leave political posturing to others. We will keep on top of the situation and as the direction becomes clearer, we will share any new information and/or request any advocacy efforts as needed.



Legislative Symposium

Remember that the annual ASCLS/CLMA/ASCP/AMT legislative symposium is sneaking up on us. It is scheduled for March 15-16, 2010 at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel. The issue of health care reform will be front and center at the symposium. If any form of reform does pass, there will need to be significant reconciliation will be required during 2010, and ASCLS will need to speak with **One Voice** to assure that the needs of the clinical laboratory are addressed and that potential additional cuts in reimbursement are carefully considered.

Issues can change rapidly in the nation's capitol so there will be other issues to communicate with our elected representatives in Congress. . Planning for the conference is currently underway.

If you have not yet registered, the registration form for the symposium along with the hotel information is available on the ASCLS website at the following link:

<http://www.ascls.org/conferences/2010LegDay/Flyer%20LEGDAY%202010.doc>

If you have any questions about regulatory issues and state and national legislative issues, please contact Rick Panning at 612-262-5012 or rick.panning@allina.com.

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