

Congressional

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Education Project

Supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The year 2009 could see the start of new efforts to enact significant reform of America's health system. To help key congressional health legislative staff prepare for the coming debate on health reform, the Alliance for Health Reform has organized a series of educational seminars on health care and reform issues specially designed for this audience. The Congressional Health Care Reform Education Project will present weekly seminars from September through October with additional courses offered in November 2008 through February 2009 depending on interest and the Congressional schedule. The project is funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Invitations to participate in these seminars are being extended to the Democratic and Republican health legislative assistants who will be most involved in shaping health reform legislation. Specifically, the project is designed for senior staff working for members of Congress on the health subcommittees of the Senate Finance and HELP committees in the Senate, and the Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Education and Labor committees in the House. The project will be organized and operated to create a common foundation of knowledge and many opportunities for dialogue for these key congressional staff members.

Course content and speakers will reflect the most important issues confronting policymakers. Top experts from around the country will offer presentations and will be available to answer questions. Presentations will either be non-partisan or will balance partisan viewpoints over the span of the course. Each seminar will include ample time for discussion among the participants.

The seminar program begins on Friday, September 12, with separate sessions for House and Senate staffs. The session for House staff will be held from 10 a.m. until noon in the Rayburn House Office Building, and the session for Senate staff will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Reserve Officers Association building at 1st and Constitution NE. Topics for this first seminar will include current health insurance coverage patterns and trends, health care spending patterns and trends, and quality issues.

Seminars are scheduled each Friday at the same times, at least through the end of October. Topics to be addressed in later seminars include public health insurance programs, individual and employer-sponsored insurance, benefit design, delivery system issues, tax treatment of health care, cost and budget concerns, and state reform efforts. Additional sessions will be offered as needed.

The project is being managed by the Alliance for Health Reform, which has more than 15 years of experience in providing education on health and health care issues to the Washington policy community. A bipartisan team of health policy analysts is putting together the courses in consultation with top congressional staff leadership. The team includes: Joe Antos, former assistant director at the Congressional Budget Office and now the Wilson H. Taylor scholar at the American Enterprise Institute; Brian Biles, former staff director of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee and now a professor at George Washington University; Michelle Easton, formerly chief counsel for health of the Senate Finance Committee and now a partner at Tarplin, Downs and Young, LLC; and Dean Rosen, former chief health advisor to Senator Bill Frist and now a partner at Mehlman Vogel Castagnetti Inc.

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