Notes from 2-7 Federation Health Reform Discussion

Legislative Environment

The path forward on repeal, replace and/or repairing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is highly uncertain. House action on a reconciliation package could occur in March or April, but the policy details remain in flux. A similar situation exists in the Senate with divergent views on process and policy solutions. Securing 218 votes in the House may require a policy formulation that is different from what gains 51 votes in the Senate. House and Senate GOP leadership are under pressure to act on high profile campaign promises to repeal the ACA and to make way for action on federal budget matters and tax reform. Anxieties have been heightened as a result of some intense demonstrations of opposition to ACA repeal in select congressional districts.

Congress is expected to advance legislation in the March/April timeframe to stabilize the Exchange market to avoid a major insurer exodus for the 2018 plan year.

Trump Administration

Administration actions to alter ACA policies are expected following the anticipated confirmation of Dr. Tom Price as HHS Secretary. These include policy changes to lower risks and costs for insurers with varying impact on patient populations (reduced grace period, age rating adjustments and flexibility on out of pocket costs).

Priorities and Objectives

Meeting participants were in agreement with objectives outlined by the AMA in the January 3 letter to Congress. ACP, AAFP, ACOG, AOA and AAP have advanced similar objectives with greater specificity. ACEP and the California Medical Association also shared their objectives.

A recommendation to expand AMA objectives to include preservation of Essential Health Benefits policies will be deferred pending discussions of the Insurance Market - Consumer Protections, Standards, Benefits work group.

Formation of Work Groups

The following topics were identified as topics that would benefit from a work group to refine our advocacy work:

- Medicaid/CHIP
- Regulatory Relief (separate and apart from ongoing MACRA/QPP work)
- Insurance Market – Consumer Protections, Standards, Benefits (includes Essential Health Benefits, federal/state oversight)

Potential Coalition Partners

Coordination with Governors on Medicaid reforms was embraced as a high value opportunity.
AMA is initiating discussions with the American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association and American Cancer Society regarding potential joint efforts to advance shared health reform objectives. State medical societies expressed strong interest in coordinating activities at the local level.

**Grassroots**

Health reform will be a major focus for Hill visits for the upcoming AMA National Advocacy Conference (Feb. 27-March 1). Messaging will track objectives outlined in AMA Jan. 3 letter to Congress.

AMA is also developing a new platform to support future grassroots work on health reform topics that will be shared in a few weeks.

**Other Policy Issues**

Executive orders dealing with immigration, noncitizen eligibility for public assistance, revisiting policy surrounding the Hobby Lobby case and potential defunding of Planned Parenthood were discussed. Participants will continue to track these developments. Some concern was expressed about the need to preserve resources and political capital for those issues that will have greatest impact on patients and physicians.

**Next Steps**

Those interested in participating in one of three work groups should contact Cindy Brown (cynthia.brown@ama-assn.org).

Top regulatory relief objectives (other than MACRA/QPP issues) should be conveyed to Margaret Garikes (Margaret.Garikes@ama-assn.org).

Participants were encouraged to attend the upcoming AMA National Advocacy Conference (Feb. 27-March 1). [https://www.ama-assn.org/national-advocacy-conference](https://www.ama-assn.org/national-advocacy-conference)

AMA will reconvene the group (conference calls or in person) when there is greater clarity about the legislative path forward.