



Special Alert

January 8, 2001

Congressional Appointments Made To Key Committees

The House Republican Conference confirmed its selections for committee chairmanships last week. The Senate will finalize its selections later this week, however, it did come to an agreement on a "power sharing" arrangement that will provide equal party representation on all committees. Under this agreement, any tied committee vote will be decided upon by the full Senate.

In the House of Representatives, Rep. Bill Thomas (R-CA) was named chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Thomas, who previously served as chairman of the Health Subcommittee, will be replaced by Rep. Nancy Johnson (R-CT). Rep. Johnson stated in a release that her first priority as chairman would be to create a prescription drug benefit for seniors.

On the Senate side, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) was named chairman of the Finance Committee and Sen. Max Baucus (R-MT) will be the ranking member. It was announced that former Finance Health Subcommittee staff member, Monica Tencate, would lead the Finance health staff. Also, John Angell, former assistant secretary for congressional affairs at the Energy Department, will serve as staff director for Sen. Max Baucus.

Both the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee have signaled that Medicare reform will be a top priority in the 107th Congress. Rep. Thomas is expected to continue playing a pivotal role in legislative changes impacting homecare providers. Both Sen. Grassley and Rep. Johnson have shown support for homecare providers in the past.

Also in the House, the former House Commerce Committee will now be named the House Energy and Commerce Committee (which was its name prior to the 104th Congress), with Rep. W.J. "Billy" Tauzin (R-LA) as chairman. The Committee was renamed and had some of its financial service responsibilities transferred to the newly formed Financial Services Committee, which will be chaired by Michael Oxley (R-OH). The Energy and Commerce Committee will continue to oversee Medicaid, parts of Medicare, SCHIP, the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, and the Public Health Service Act. The chairmanship of the Subcommittee on Health and Environment has yet to be named. Senior House Republicans are working to allow Rep. Michael

Bilirakis (R-FL) to retain chairmanship for another two years. If Bilirakis is not granted a waiver, Chairman Tauzin is expected to create a new health subpanel. Although it is likely that health care issues will dominate the 107th Congress, Tauzin has not yet released his Committee's legislative priorities.

As reported in the- *AAHomecare Update*, President-elect George W. Bush has nominated Gov. Tommy Thompson (R-WI) as Secretary of Health and Human Services. Best known for leading welfare reform in his home state, Thompson has supported the use of homecare services to help produce savings in Wisconsin's health care system.

While the position for HCFA administrator remains open, many names are circulating as potential candidates, including: Bobby Jindal, the former Louisiana Secretary of Health and Hospitals and staff member for the bi-partisan Medicare Commission; Chip Kahn, the previous key staff member for the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health; and Howard Cohen, the key previous staff member for the House Commerce Committee. There is also a discussion that Gov. Thompson may want to bring in his own people for the position.

AAHomecare will keep its members informed of any breaking new developments through e-mail announcements and web site. For a complete list of committee appointments, visit AAHomecare's web site at www.aahomecare.net/Special%20Alerts/commchairs.htm.