

Casey Legislative Highlights 2013

Protecting Funding for Children's Hospitals in Pennsylvania

On November 12, 2013, the Senate passed S. 1557, the Children's Hospital GME Support Reauthorization Act of 2013 by unanimous consent. The Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education (CHGME) program provides freestanding children's hospitals with federal graduate medical education (GME) support similar to the funding that other teaching hospitals receive through Medicare. The program was first enacted by Congress in 1999 with bipartisan support, and has been reauthorized twice since then, each time again with broad bipartisan support. The program provides funding to about 55 freestanding children's hospitals in 30 states, including three in Pennsylvania, to support the training of pediatricians and other residents.

The Children's Hospital GME Support Reauthorization Act of 2013 will reauthorize the program for five years at \$300 million a year. The legislation also makes important changes to the program by giving the Secretary authority to include in the program a small number of freestanding children's hospitals who have been ineligible to participate in the past for technical reasons. The bill allows the Secretary to use a portion of the funds appropriated over \$245 million for these children's hospitals that train pediatric providers and meet the same general qualifications as existing participants but currently do not qualify for Medicare GME or CHGME. The amount of this pool in a given year would be 25% of enacted CHGME funding over \$245 million, up to a maximum of \$7 million, and hospitals would have to undergo a normal application process.

Senator Casey worked for two years with bipartisan colleagues on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee to find a path forward on this reauthorization.

Helping Families Save for their Disabled Children

The ABLE Act would help individuals and families save for future expenses related to a disability. The bill, introduced with Senator Burr (R-NC), has widespread, bipartisan support in both the Senate and the House of Representatives with over half of members of each chamber pledging support for the bill (to date 50 in the Senate and 307 in House.) Under current law, many individuals with disabilities are forced to divest their assets to qualify for assistance under certain federal programs. This dynamic effectively impoverishes these individuals and prevents them and their families from building and using savings to meet expenses not covered by federal programs. The ABLE Act would authorize a new type of 529 Savings Account to allow individuals with disabilities and their families to save money to cover key expenses such as medical care, employment training and support, community support services, assistive technology, housing, education and transportation. The bill enjoys support of a wide array of advocacy organizations including the National Down Syndrome Society, Autism Speaks and the Arc. The bill has great momentum and passage of the ABLE Act has been discussed in the context of tax reform or another relevant vehicle.

Boosting NIH Medical Research Funding

Senator Casey is recognized as one of the top Senate champions of NIH funding and successfully circulated two NIH funding letters with Senator Burr this year. The first, to Senate appropriators, had a bipartisan group of 50 additional senators sign on. The second, which was sent to the Budget Committee leadership earlier this week, had 33 additional senators sign on. Senator Casey has authored the annual letter to appropriators in support of NIH funding since 2010.

Funding to Fix Pennsylvania's Crumbling Bridges

Pennsylvania leads the country in structurally deficient bridges currently with 5,543 out of 22,667 total bridges being classified as structurally deficient. This translates to over 19 million daily trips taken over structurally deficient bridges across the state.

Only 10% of structurally deficient bridges nationwide are eligible for federal funding as part of the National Highway System. In Pennsylvania, the vast majority of bridges that are structurally deficient are local and state roads, and thus ineligible for federal improvement funding under current restrictions.

In order to help address this, Senator Casey successfully added an amendment to MAP-21, the transportation reauthorization bill, last year that established a dedicated revenue stream for off-system bridges which are bridges that are owned by counties and municipalities. As result of this amendment, Pennsylvania received nearly \$74 million for off-system bridges in FY 2013, second only to California in terms of a total dollar amount.

While this funding is a step in the right direction, there are still a significant number of bridges across the Commonwealth in need of repair. In some cases, off-system bridges have been closed while they are awaiting repair which forces commuters, emergency vehicles, and school buses to take longer routes. To further address this problem, Senator Casey introduced S. 1504 in September. The purpose of this bill is to increase the set-aside for off-systems bridges from 15% to 25%. This would increase the amount of funding dedicated to off-system bridges in Pennsylvania to approximately \$103 million per year, which is about a \$30 million increase from FY 2013. Senator Casey is going to advocate for consideration of this bill in the next transportation reauthorization bill if Congress is able to come to an agreement that will increase the overall amount that is available in the Highway Trust Fund.

Combating Sexual Violence on Campuses

Sexual violence and violence in dating relationships are a serious problem on college campuses across the country. More than one in five female undergraduates will be victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault during their time on a campus; only a fraction of incidents are reported and many victims go without adequate institutional support.

The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act closes a serious gap in the law by requiring colleges and universities to clearly spell out their policies regarding domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking, and will increase awareness and prevention of these acts by requiring transparency of information, prevention programs

and assistance for victims. The Campus SaVE Act updates the Clery Act, the landmark federal law (originally known as the Campus Security Act) that requires colleges and universities across the United States to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses.

Senator Casey first introduced the Campus SaVE Act in 2010. Working with Judiciary Committee Chairman Leahy, he was able to get the Campus SaVE Act included in the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act in 2011; this bill was then reintroduced early in the 113th Congress in 2013 as S. 47. With Senator Casey's support, S. 47 swiftly passed both chambers and was signed into law on March 7, 2013.

Investing in Pre-Kindergarten Education

Senator Casey first introduced legislation for universal pre-k in 2007 and has pushing for it ever since. This year, Senator Casey played a key role in the development of the Strong Start for America's Children Act, which was introduced by Senator Harkin, with Senator Casey's support, in mid-November. The bill includes significant elements of Senator Casey's bill, the Prepare All Kids Act, and the office has been thanked by leading children's advocates for being able to get so much of Prepare All Kids included, especially provisions that would be beneficial to Pennsylvania.

Strengthening Iran Sanctions

In July 2013, Senator Casey joined 75 of his Senate colleagues in signing a letter to President Obama authored by Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey which calls for the U.S. to toughen sanctions and reinforce the credibility of our option to use military force at the same time as we fully explore a diplomatic solution to our dispute with Iran. The letter outlines four strategic elements necessary to achieve resolution of this issue: an explicit continuing message that we will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapons capability, a demonstration of openness to negotiations, the maintenance and toughening of sanctions, and a convincing threat of the use of force that Iran will believe.

Before the interim deal was reached on Iran's nuclear program in November, Senator Casey joined with five other Senators in writing to Secretary of State John Kerry, expressing their support for negotiations but cautioning the Administration against accepting a deal with Iran that would roll back economic sanctions without also rolling back progress towards nuclear weapons capability.

Fighting Bullying in Schools

Senator Casey introduced the first anti-bullying bill in the Senate, the Safe Schools Improvement Act. It has amassed 43 cosponsors, including Senators Kirk and Murkowski. Aimed at addressing bullying and harassment in schools, SSIA requires districts receiving federal funds to adopt student conduct policies prohibiting bullying, including harassment towards LGBT students. SSIA is included in the Strengthening America's Schools Act, a bill passed by the HELP Committee in June that overhauls the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Chairman Harkin has committed to bringing that bill to the floor in 2014.

Addressing the Syria Conflict

Senator Casey has repeatedly called for a more robust U.S. response to the crisis in Syria. What happens in Syria is of great consequence to our national security and to our allies in the region. It is of vital interest to the United States and our allies to have a stable Syria in the heart of the Middle East. Contrary to that interest, letting the civil war drag on and the humanitarian crisis grow would create further instability.

Senator Casey introduced S. 617, the Syria Democratic Transition Act of 2013 on March 19 with Senator Marco Rubio of Florida. This bill includes a combination of humanitarian assistance, non-lethal equipment and training to the vetted elements of the Free Syrian Army, and sanctions against elements of the regime. Key provisions from this legislation were included as amendments to S. 960, the Syria Transition Support Act, which passed the Senator Foreign Relations Committee in May.

Promoting Economic Development by Improving Waterway Infrastructure

In February, Senator Casey introduced the Reinvesting in Vital Economic Rivers (RIVER) Act in order to address critical challenges that face the inland waterways system. Locks and dams play a vital role in sustaining jobs throughout the country and the inland waterways system offers the most cost-competitive way to transport commodities. The shippers who produce or manufacture these commodities are in danger of losing their competitive edge unless we focus on proper funding for the inland waterways infrastructure.

Over 200,000 jobs rely on a functional inland waterways system in southwestern Pennsylvania alone. Senator Casey's RIVER Act would establish sustainable, cost-effective ways to ensure that the inland waterways system remains economically viable. This bill would modernize the inland waterways system, create jobs, relieve traffic congestion, and optimize American competitiveness of the most low-cost, energy-efficient transportation mode.

Senator Casey secured the inclusion of several of the RIVER Act's key provisions into the Senate passed Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). In particular, he worked to include project delivery reforms which will improve the Army Corps of Engineers' project management process and help to deliver projects on time and on budget. In addition, Senator Casey fought to include project prioritization reforms that will create clear priorities for lock and dam projects and ensure that projects are completed in a timely fashion. Additionally, the Senator increased to the government's cost-share requirement on major rehabilitation projects will help to complete current projects and fund more in the future.

Moreover, the Senator championed a provision in WRDA that adjusts the federal cost-share for the Olmsted Lock and Dam Project which will speed its completion and free up significant funding for other lock and dam construction projects. Finally, Senator Casey supported an amendment that will allow small rural water projects to compete for infrastructure funding.

Both the House and the Senate had strong support for their waterways bills, and the WRDA bill is now being conferenced between the two chambers. It is expected that the Senate will vote on a final bill in the next few months that will include several of Senator Casey's reforms.

Making the Farm Bill Work for Pennsylvania Farmers and Consumers

Senator Casey is committed to fighting for Pennsylvania's farmers, families and the agriculture industry. He understands the economic and cultural value of Pennsylvania agriculture and believes in the importance of providing Pennsylvanians with a safe, nutritious, abundant and affordable food supply. As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, he has secured provisions in the Senate's 2013 Farm Bill to help Pennsylvania's farmers. Senator Casey obtained language to require USDA report on the proposed dairy market stabilization program and obtained codification of more frequent dairy price reporting. He supported provisions aimed at assisting small, beginning and veteran farmers and ranchers, for example clarifying eligibility for Value Added Producer Grant projects. Senator Casey helped lead the fight for specialty crop producers including securing language supporting the domestic honey industry and maintaining important research programs. He attained important conservation assistance for Pennsylvania's farmers, particularly those in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Senator Casey also had included language for forest products to be included in the bio-based program and encouraged a provision to fund key energy programs. Senator Casey has fought for provisions to support small farms in Pennsylvania, which are an essential source of economic activity in and are vital to getting healthy, local food from farm to table.

Preparing for Pandemics and Bioterror Attacks

As a result of the passage of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA) of 2006, the federal government, in partnership with state and local governments, took significant steps to strengthen our nation's medical and public health preparedness and response capabilities. The bipartisan reauthorization builds on these efforts by enhancing existing programs and authorities using lessons learned since 2006 to maximize our nation's resilience to threats, whether naturally occurring or deliberate.

The Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act (H.R. 307) passed earlier this year and was signed into law, making important updates to PAHPA. This was the result of over a year of work in a bipartisan and eventually bicameral process. Senator Casey was one of the Senate leads (Burr, Harkin, Enzi/Alexander), and was able to push for several priorities, including a greater emphasis on including children in preparedness efforts and access to potassium iodide following radiation exposure.

Senator Casey championed several provisions, including: promoting coordination between HHS and DOD on their biodefense/preparedness activities; requiring HHS to map out and biennially update its medical countermeasure strategy, so that Congress and the private sector can better calibrate their efforts; several provisions designed to ensure that the challenges associated with developing and procuring medical countermeasures for children are addressed; and several provisions to ensure that the

Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise is transparent and accountable for the use of its taxpayer funds.

Boosting Law Enforcement Funding

A bipartisan amendment offered by Senator Casey was unanimously adopted by the Senate to increase funding for law enforcement through the Byrne Justice Assistance Grants Program (Byrne-JAG). This program supports crime fighting innovation and has helped local law enforcement agencies across Pennsylvania ensure immediate and thorough responses to crimes. This effort came on the heels of repeated calls for the President, Vice President, and House and Senate leadership to increase law enforcement funding.

Encouraging Transparent and Credible Presidential Elections in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is scheduled to hold presidential and parliamentary elections on April 5, 2014. These elections bear special significance, as Afghanistan faces concurrent political, economic, and security transitions, and flaws in previous elections have left the Afghan people wary of the electoral process and doubtful of its integrity. The 2014 elections will be a key determinant of Afghanistan's future stability.

Senator Casey introduced S. Res. 151 to assert the importance of holding transparent, credible, and inclusive elections and encourage the Afghan government to empower independent electoral bodies to oversee elections, address complaints, and work with Afghan National Security Forces to provide security. The resolution acknowledges the contributions of the Karzai government while urging the Secretary of State to condition assistance to Afghanistan on the implementation of key electoral reforms. It affirms the elections should be Afghan-led and free from interference.

S. Res. 151 was co-sponsored by eight key Senators before being agreed to in the Senate by unanimous consent on July 9, 2013.

Increase Accountability and Transparency in the Job Corps Program

Senator Casey's bipartisan amendment with Senator Hatch to increase accountability and transparency in the Job Corps program was adopted in Committee by voice vote. The amendment requires additional reporting on a number of measures including the financial status of the Job Corps program and implementation of changes recommended by the OIG as well as an assessment by the OIG of the administrative changes made in Job Corps. Floor action is expected in 2014.

A Successful Judicial Nominations Process

Senator Casey has developed a successful bipartisan process with Senator Toomey for recommending Pennsylvania federal judicial and U.S. Attorney candidates to the White House. Senators Casey and Toomey jointly select a federal judicial selection review panel comprised of leading members of the bar and well respected Pennsylvanian citizens to interview all applicants and then make recommendations to the senators. The PA candidates who are nominated by the White House have been supported and

recommended by both Senators Casey and Toomey and confirmed by strong majorities in the Senate. Since President Obama took office, eight Federal judges and three U.S. attorneys in Pennsylvania have been nominated and confirmed through this process.