

This issue is part of a series of periodic reports from the National Health Law Program's Washington office, reporting briefly on recent and forthcoming developments in federal policy of interest to NHeLP advocates and friends. We always appreciate your feedback and comments.

Please send them to Deborah Reid at [reid@healthlaw.org](mailto:reid@healthlaw.org). For updates and information on NHeLP publications, go to <http://www.healthlaw.org>

## SUBJECTS COVERED

Election Aftermath

New Leadership - White House

Senate and House

Cabinet Positions

Democrats' Legislative Agenda

Resource **NEW LEADERSHIP – WHITE HOUSE:** On November 4, the nation elected Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) to be the 44th President of the United States, with 365 electoral votes, over Senator John McCain (R-AZ) who received 173 electoral votes. A total of 270 electoral votes are required to win the election. President-elect Obama received 53% of the votes (66,882,230), with Senator McCain obtaining 46% (58,343,671).

**SENATE AND HOUSE:** Democrats reinforced their control of the Senate by getting seven additional seats to obtain a 58 seat majority, with the Republicans receiving 41. States with changes to a Democratic senator are Oregon, Colorado, New Mexico, Virginia, North Carolina, New Hampshire, and Alaska. Wyoming and Mississippi changed to a Republican senator.

With the reelection of Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) on December 2, the Democrats will not reach 60 seats, which would have provided them with a filibuster-proof majority position in the Senate. As of now, only the senatorial race in Minnesota remains undecided, with the incumbent Senator Norm Coleman (R-MN) and the Democratic candidate Al Franken in a virtual dead heat.

In the House races, Democrats retained more than the 218 seats needed for control of the House with 256 seats, while the Republicans were elected to 178 positions. To date, one House race remains contested: Virginia (District 5) – Democrat Tom Perriello and Rep. Republican Virgil Goode. Recent House election results include: Louisiana (District 4) - Republican John Fleming winning a run-off election against Democrat Paul Carmouche; Louisiana (District 2) – Republican Anh “Joseph” Cao upsetting the Democratic incumbent Rep. William Jefferson; and Ohio (District 15) – Democrat Mary Kilroy defeating Republican Steve

Stivers.

**CABINET POSITIONS:** President-elect Obama recently selected two individuals for cabinet positions that impact the quality of health care and the right to health in the United States. Eric Holder was recommended for the Attorney General position at the Department of Justice. Former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota was nominated to head the newly created White House Office of Health Reform, as well as serve as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

**DEMOCRATS' LEGISLATIVE AGENDA:** It is anticipated that a priority item on the Democrats' legislative agenda will be to address the current economic crisis and corresponding shortfalls in state budgets, by initiating a second economic stimulus bill shortly after January 20, 2009. While more individuals are unemployed because of the recession and relying on Medicaid for health care, states are simultaneously faced with dwindling budgets and are increasingly implementing cutbacks in safety net programs in order to balance their budgets. President-elect Obama recently met with the National Governors' Association, which requested \$176 billion of the anticipated economic stimulus funding, with \$40 billion to be used to strengthen Medicaid, and the remaining \$136 billion to support infrastructure projects (such as repairing roads, bridges, and public transit).

**RESOURCE:** The National Health Law Program has released a new publication, the "Medicaid Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) Fact Sheet," which provides answers to commonly asked questions about the EPSDT program. The factsheet can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/5wfzej>. For questions or feedback on the Capital Communique, e-mail Patti Riippa at [riippa@healthlaw.org](mailto:riippa@healthlaw.org)

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