Happy Asian Pacific American Heritage Month! Check out all of the fabulous activities that NAPAWF chapters and staff have planned this month by clicking here!

NAPAWF ~ ON THE HILL

The FY 2012 Budget: Battle Lines Drawn

Last month, we mentioned that the House was considering an extreme Budget Resolution that would devastate public services that are heavily relied upon by low- and moderate-income families. At that time we hoped that the proposal would be too extreme even for Republicans. Unfortunately, we found out how far we’ve swung to the Right. In a nutshell, the House Budget Resolution basically offers a plethora of tax cuts to the wealthy and super rich, decimates Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and the SNAP/food stamp program, all while failing to lower the deficit. Say whaa..? Yep, this draconian resolution, which cuts Medicaid by $1.4 trillion over ten years, would use all the savings gained from cutting public benefit programs to award millionaires with more tax breaks. Can you hear my teeth grinding together? First though, it is important to understand that the Budget Resolution is an outline of broad policy suggestions that may or may not be adopted by the House committees. It also contains a specific funding level for annual appropriations. So while it is not a binding resolution, it does set the stage for an intense battle between the House, Senate and White House in establishing the 2012 budget and appropriations process, with some members of Congress broadcasting that they will hold the nation hostage, especially during the key moments of the Appropriations process and during efforts to raise the debt ceiling. So let’s break it down. In ten years, the uber-rich walk away with nearly $4.2 trillion in tax cuts, seniors on Medicare would pay more
than double for medical care, and Medicaid and the SNAP/food stamps program would become block grants, allowing states to reduce core benefits, serve fewer people, or reduce services provided to beneficiaries. Never mind that the SNAP program has been credited with doing more to spur the economy and prevent job loss than almost any other action taken to assist the millions of people who were impacted during the Great Recession. Let it also be known that an alternative “People’s Budget” resolution proposed by the Congressional Progressive Caucus that would have done more to reduce the deficit without decimating public programs was rejected by the House. Grr...

House Conservatives Take Some Heat

Looks like folks across the country are also “very grr..” During the recent House recess, lawmakers who voted in favor of the aforementioned awful Budget Resolution found themselves facing angry voters back home who attended various townhall meetings to give voice to some pretty tough questions about tax cuts for the rich and efforts to gut Medicare. Democrats are taking advantage of this moment to push out attack ads in key congressional districts to highlight the Medicare components of the House plan. Suddenly shaken, the House leadership hosted a conference call for their members for new sound bites to assuage voters. So don’t be tricked by the tomfoolery that’s sure to be coming through the media from our right-wing legislators. This budget battle is for real!

The House Declares War on Women

On May 4th, in a party-line vote (that includes 16 Democrats who continue to dabble in the Dark Arts), the House approved HR 3, the virulent anti-abortion bill that eliminates tax breaks for insurance providers that cover abortion services, codifies a federal provision to prohibit federal funds be used for abortion services, and generally further restricts a woman’s access to the procedure. See the NAPAWF statement for more about this terrible vote. Fortunately, the measure is not likely to survive the Senate or a President’s veto but ladies (and boi’s), this vote means war and we plan to fight back! My body and health is nobody’s political pawn!
Health Law Defunding Efforts Continue

Since the beginning of the 112th Congressional session, conservatives in the House have worked to chip away small pieces of the Affordable Care Act. They’ve been successful in removing the unpopular 1099 tax provision and stripping funds from a co-op insurance program. Rather than be satisfied with these wins, the ground ceded has only whetted their appetite and encouraged them to go for more. In April, the House voted to strip $17 billion for prevention efforts, remove funds to assist states in setting up their health insurance exchanges and expand school health clinics were being marked up in preparation for floor action, even though the President has threatened to veto any such legislation. And be ready - fiscal conservatives are fully prepared to use every opportunity, including negotiations over the debt ceiling and the FY 2012 appropriations bill, to try to squeeze more funds from the Affordable Care Act implementation.

NAPAWF continues to work with other health care advocates to protect this vitally important domestic policy and is hosting a national conference call, “ACA Don’t Go Away” on the Affordable Care Act on May 10th in honor of National Women’s Health Week. This informational call with help you understand the law, the state exchange system, and its importance to you and your community. If you know you want to support this important new law but feel like you need to know more to become a better advocate, this call is for you! Contact Jaspreet Chowdhary at rjfellow@napawf.org for more information!

Raising Awareness of HIV/AIDS

NAPAWF is also pleased to announce our support of a Banyan Tree Project webinar on May 10th at 12pm PDT, “Saving Face: A Closer Look at Structural and Cultural Factors affecting HIV Infection in A&PI Women”. In addition, on May 19th, in support of the 7th annual observance of National Asian Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, API communities will gather at over 20 local events to respond to the alarming rise in new HIV infections in the API community, an often overlooked population in mainstream HIV prevention strategies. Recent analysis of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals that APIs have the highest rate of increase in new HIV infections in the nation. Importantly, HIV incidence rate is actually higher for API women than that of A&PI men. Despite this, the misconception that A&PIs are not at-risk, or at low risk for HIV infection persists, even among health care
providers who discourage A&PIs from getting tested. These statistics are disturbing, but you can help raise awareness in your community by participating in the May 10th webinar or joining an event on May 19th. Visit www.banyantreeproject.org to find an event near you.

Happy Mother’s Day!

For Mother’s Day weekend, the National Coalition for Immigrant Women’s Rights launched an op-ed series on RH Reality to combat negative stereotypes of immigrant women and mothers. The series, which includes the NAPAWF op-ed “How Our Immigration Policies Hurt Families-- And All of Us”, is a coordinated effort by immigrant rights advocates to push back against the anti-immigrant campaign to end birthright citizenship for the American-born children of immigrant mothers. This is just one part of a larger effort to center a gender analysis within the immigrant rights movement. In addition, immigrant rights and women’s groups are preparing to convene a "Women’s Group Exchange" on May 25th as part of the Turning the Tides conference on immigration enforcement will happen in Arlington, VA May 26th through the 28th. NAPAWF members and other women’s rights and immigrant right’s groups are invited to. To find out more, contact Chris Harley at charley@napawf.org.

NAPAWF ~ IN THE ADMINISTRATION

White House Holds Immigration Meeting

Last month, President Obama hosted a White House meeting on immigration with 70 national leaders to identify rational solutions to fix the immigration system. Although it is heartening to see renewed interest from the Administration, Obama continues to punt the ball to Congress, without acknowledging the action steps that Administration officials can take now to improve the lives of immigrants. Furthermore, the President continues to stick to immigration enforcement talking points, emphasizing the need to “secure our borders” and “enhance immigration enforcement”, all the while expressing concern about immigration policies that result in broken families, workplace abuses, and inequities that make immigrant
communities vulnerable. Let’s check the facts. The Secure Communities and the 287(g) program are both federal immigration enforcement initiatives that have wreaked havoc in immigrant communities nationwide due to the record-number of deportations that have resulted from their implementation. The President has the power to order their suspension, but has not done so. We know this to be true because just this month, the Department of Homeland Security announced that it was suspending the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) program, another terrible immigration enforcement program wrought with controversy. NSEERS was implemented in the aftermath of 9/11 to track Arab and Muslim men and boys living within the US. It resulted in the deportation of thousands of people from Arab- and Muslim-majority countries for civil immigration violations, caused unlawful racial profiling, and tore apart Arab- and Muslim-American communities. The suspension of this program is highly welcome and should be a model for ending other ineffective enforcement programs such as Secure Communities and 287(g). C’mon, Mr. President! We need action, not words!

Announcing the Healthy Salons Week of Action

The National Healthy Nail Salon Alliance has been working for the past several months to host a Healthy Salons Week of Action, May 16-20th. We’ll be in DC for an interagency meeting co-hosted by the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, to meet with leading officials from several key agencies responsible for overseeing cosmetic products, the environment, and salon working conditions. Alliance members will also host a Congressional Briefing, “Toxic Beauty: Salon Workers’ Exposure to Dangerous Chemicals” on Wednesday, May 18th. This event will follow-up on the great work that Alliance members have done to raise awareness about formaldehyde exposure to salon workers using the Brazilian Blowout hair straightening product, which resulted in OSHA issuing a National Hazard Alert last month. This is also an opportunity to highlight a report that NAPAWF is producing on federal oversight of nail salons and to advocate on behalf of the Safe Cosmetics Act, upcoming legislation to strengthen oversight of cosmetic products. Join us for the Congressional Briefing and Lobby Days! To find out more about the Week of Action and Alliance advocacy efforts, visit www.nailsalonalliance.org.
Vermont Senate Passes Universal Health Care

The Healthcare Is a Human Right campaign has scored a major victory with the April 26th vote in the Vermont Senate in favor of universal health care. Overcoming significant business opposition, Vermont is thisclose to becoming the first state in the country to have a publicly financed, single-payer health care system. Still, this rosy story isn’t quite over; undocumented immigrants were stripped from coverage from the legislation and the campaign is fighting now to include them. Meanwhile, other state governments are trying to figure out how to get their health exchanges up and running after Republicans blocked local laws to implement the exchanges. Honestly, I’m curious as to whether these efforts become an idiot move when these states are ultimately forced to accept a federal exchange system that provides for better health coverage to the residents of these states.

The Arizona Taint Spreads

Unfortunately, two states have followed the fiscally irresponsible and harmful anti-immigrant legislation from Arizona. Georgia and Utah both recently approved SB 1070 copycat legislation, although Utah did a pretty good job of pretending their anti-immigrant bill was a nicer, gentler version because they coupled it with a guest worker program. Still, both states’ legislation authorizes police to demand “papers” demonstrating citizenship or immigration status during traffic stops, invites racial profiling of Latinos and others who appear “foreign” to an officer and interferes with federal law. In both states, business leaders, civic leaders and local law enforcement came out against the legislation because it undermines trust and cooperation between police and immigrant communities. Maybe the elected officials in these states need some new hearing aids since they apparently couldn’t hear their constituents explain how irrational, ineffective, and harmful these policies are. In any case, immigrant rights activists have already filed legal challenges to the Utah legislation and NAPAWF is prepared to join amicus briefs to fight these unconstitutional and un-American laws.
Supreme Court Denial

The legal battles over the health care law continue. Last month, the Virginia attorney general filed a motion with the US Supreme Court to expedite its review of legal challenges to the law. However, the Supreme Court turned down the request and the legal process will continue on to the appeals courts. Meanwhile, 26 states joined an amicus brief to ask the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold the Florida federal judge ruling to block implementation of the law.

Can We Get A Vote?

A fun fact for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is that the longest waiting U.S. District Court nominee and the longest waiting U.S. Circuit Court nominee are both Asian American. U.S. District Court nominee Edward M. Chen has waited over 600 days for a confirmation vote while U.S. Circuit Court nominee Goodwin Liu has waited over 400 days. This is even though both of their nominations would fill vacancies that have been classified as a “judicial emergency” by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. But, we have a glimmer of hope! Senator Reid has negotiated with Republicans to debate Chen’s nomination with a floor vote expected next week. NAPAWF continues to support both nominees.