



2014 Year-End CRT Legislation Report

December 22, 2014

CRT Stakeholders and Friends,

Last week Congress ended their 113th Session and will be reconvening on January 6th for their 114th Session. We wanted to provide a year-end federal legislative recap and outline the plans for 2015.

While we did not get our CRT bill passed this session, we have established an excellent foundation to move it over the finish line next year. We end the year with 168 Representatives signed on to HR-942 and 22 Senators signed on to S-948. That's 190 Members of Congress supporting CRT legislation! The list of co-sponsors by state is available at www.access2crt.org.

This progress is a direct result of a wide cross section of CRT stakeholders taking the time to reach out to their Members and staff through emails, phone calls, social media, and in-person meetings. We know it is not easy to do this outreach with all the other demands on people's time. But we have proven that commitment and persistency pays off. Our progress is also attributable to the broad support from over 50 national consumer and clinical groups that have formally gone on record supporting passage of the legislation. We are very grateful for this.

While we achieved very good quantity in terms of co-sponsors, we also have great quality. Our co-sponsors provide solid bi-partisan support with 103 Democrats and 65 Republicans on board in the House and 16 Democrats and 6 Republicans on board in the Senate. We also achieved great Member representation on the key committees that have jurisdiction over the Medicare program: 22 House Ways & Means Committee Members; 17 House Energy & Commerce Committee Members; 5 Senate Finance Committee Members; and 4 Senate HELP Committee Members. Importantly, all but 4 of these Committee Members were re-elected.

Our progress is significant and we need to recognize that. Everyone's hard work is paying off and the CRT message is spreading. However our main objective remains to get the bill passed. Passage is critical to protect access to CRT for people with disabilities who rely on this specialized equipment and the related supporting services. And the need for this legislation is increasing as the access challenges on the federal and state levels continue to grow.

As we look to 2015 we have a great base to start from. The first quarter of the year will be a very busy time for Congress. They will be completing the "reorganization" necessitated by the November elections and beginning their legislative agenda. On the legislative side they must take up a bill to delay/repeal the Medicare sustainable growth rate (SGR) methodology prior to March 31st. That will be the first opportunity to get our CRT bill attached to larger Medicare legislation. There also should be other opportunities as we move through the year.

In terms of our 2015 plan, here are the actions that we will be focused on to get our CRT bill passed:

1. Update the legislation language to address Medicare changes/events of the past 2 years that compromise CRT access.
2. Reintroduce the bill in the House and Senate. This will result in new bill numbers being assigned. Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Representatives Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Joe Crowley (D-NY) have agreed to again be our leads in the new session. We are extremely appreciative of their continued support.
3. Reach out to the 2014 co-sponsors to get them to re-sign on to the new bill (including co-sponsor offices where Members retired or were not re-elected) and seek new co-sponsors.
4. Secure support and sign-off from key committee Members and committee staff.
5. Obtain a favorable CBO score.
6. Get the CRT bill attached to larger piece of Medicare legislation and passed.

One final 2014 note. For those who have time for one more year-end task, take a few minutes and send short emails to your Members' offices who have signed on (see the co-sponsor list reference above). Thank them for their support this year, wish them Happy Holidays, and let them know you will be contacting them in January as soon as the CRT bill is reintroduced. Hearing from you now will help build your relationship with them as we move ahead.

Remember to use www.access2crt.org for your CRT legislation needs.....access documents, tools, Congressional contacts, and other resources.

CRT awareness and advocacy grew significantly in 2014 and we need to continue our work in 2015. More details will be provided as we move in to January, including your new federal marching orders.

Thanks again to everyone for all your past (and future) hard work and Happy Holidays to you and your families!

Don

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