

# Health Reform Passes Legislation

Contains Key Oral Health Provisions



The U.S. House of Representatives voted to pass H.R. 3590, the health care overhaul bill passed by the Senate in December, thus ushering in a new era of health care delivery in the United States. The 219-212 vote closely followed party lines with only Democrats voting in favor of the measure. The bill now awaits President Obama's signature in order to become law. H.R. 3590 contains a number of oral health provisions that will have a significant impact on the oral health care delivery system and the dental hygiene profession. As the leading resource for information about your profession, ADHA offers this update on health reform as part of the series of health reform e-mails that have been sent since August.

The House vote brings closure to more than a year of national debate about whether or not to fundamentally overhaul the national health care system. The new law will extend health care coverage to tens of millions of Americans. While much media attention has been focused on the broad medical provisions contained in H.R. 3590, little has been reported about the significant oral health provisions included in the bill. The following offers an overview of some of the key oral health provisions:

- **Pediatric Dental Benefit:** The bill requires a dental benefit be included as part of the essential health benefits package for all eligible children (through age 21) who receive coverage through the newly-created state-based health insurance exchanges. The bill does not include an adult dental benefit.
- **Contracting with Stand-alone Dental Plans:** The bill would allow stand-alone dental plans to operate as part of the new state-based health insurance exchanges to meet pediatric dental benefit requirements. The provision accommodates the way the current system is structured in that most medical plans do not include dental benefits and most dental insurance plans are offered separate from medical plans.
- **Alternative Dental Health Care Provider Demonstration Project Grants:** The bill would allocate up to \$60 million for the education and demonstration of alternative dental health care providers, including dental hygiene and advanced practice dental hygiene workforce models.
- **Oral Health Workforce Development:** The bill includes a section that would establish programs and allocate federal monies to expand and develop the dental workforce. The provisions recognize dental hygienists as primary oral health providers through the inclusion of dental hygienists, dental hygiene students, and dental hygiene education programs as eligible entities for funds.
- **Oral Health Programs in School-based Clinics:** The bill would establish a grant program for school-based health clinics, including those that offer oral health services.
- **Oral Health Infrastructure and Surveillance:** The bill would establish a number of oral health education and surveillance programs to improve the public's understanding of the importance of oral health and collect data on access to oral health services.

A chart offering additional information about oral health provisions in H.R. 3590 is attached and is available on ADHA's website at:

[http://www.adha.org/governmental\\_affairs/downloads/Oral\\_Health\\_Provisions\\_in\\_Health\\_Reform\\_Legislation.pdf](http://www.adha.org/governmental_affairs/downloads/Oral_Health_Provisions_in_Health_Reform_Legislation.pdf).

Just minutes after the vote was taken on H.R. 3590 another vote to pass a reconciliation bill was passed by the House to amend some of the provisions contained within the health reform bill. The Senate is expected to vote on the reconciliation bill later this week. The reconciliation bill, H.R. 4872, does not alter any of the oral health provisions contained in H.R. 3590.

Throughout the process to develop health reform legislation, ADHA has been a part of the process, as directed by the association's Statement on Health Reform:

[http://www.adha.org/downloads/ADHA\\_Health\\_Reform\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.adha.org/downloads/ADHA_Health_Reform_Statement.pdf). ADHA did not take a formal position in support of or opposition to health reform, but asserted that if Congress drafted comprehensive health reform legislation, oral health provisions should be included because oral health is vital to total health. ADHA advocated strongly for the role that dental hygienists play in the delivery of oral health care and in support of provisions that extend access to care to the underserved through increased utilization of the dental hygiene workforce.

While the major vote on health reform has now taken place, significant work will continue as health reform policies are implemented. ADHA will continue its engagement in the process and will offer updates on issues that impact dental hygiene.

Please know that questions are always welcome and ADHA staff is in place to offer additional information – contact information is listed below or you can reply directly to this e-mail.

Sincerely,

**Your ADHA Governmental Affairs Team:**

Megan Fitzpatrick, Director  
Stacey Chappell, Manager  
Kathy Schroder, Manager  
Connie Johnson, Assistant  
Becky Robinson, Assistant

Telephone: 312.440.8925  
Fax: 312.467.1806  
E-mail: [gov.affairs@adha.net](mailto:gov.affairs@adha.net)  
Website: [www.adha.org](http://www.adha.org)