

# Congressional Talking Points

## Health Care Reform: February 2017



February 24, 2017

To: Physician Participants

2017 AMA National Advocacy Conference (NAC)

From: Chet Seward, Sr. Director of Health Care Policy

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Re: Congressional Delegation Meetings

Thank you for making the pilgrimage to Washington for the AMA National Advocacy Conference and visits with members of the Colorado congressional delegation and/or their staff. We will be on the trip and happy to provide assistance if needed (our cell numbers are included with the roster of participants).

While the AMA will cover in detail the current situation on federal health care reform, including ACA repeal and replace, and other issues, this memo contains points to make from a Colorado perspective while you are in the congressional meetings.

We've scheduled meetings with members of congress and/or staff, depending on availability, and of course our two US Senators. While the itinerary is self explanatory, there are nuances to keep in mind.

1. We have a solid and candid working relationship with our congressional delegation and their staff. They know many of us well since the beginning of their political careers, and will listen attentively.
2. We are not the only matter before them. Their time with us will be precious –so we have to be efficient and organized in our conversations. We don't need to “close the sale.”
3. They are very tuned in on repeal and replace and the meetings are an excellent opportunity to exchange information. **We want to give them our perspective and ask for their insights on federal health care reform as well -- what they know, don't know and how we can help them. If you don't agree with their perspective, take notes so we can follow-up. It's a little early to be pushing back too hard or drawing lines in the sand.**
4. Basic meeting protocol: The member of Congress will take the lead in the meetings - more likely to listen. Accordingly, one physician should introduce colleagues and



coordinate the conversations. In the meetings with the two U. S. Senators, this will be the CMS President, Katie Lozano, MD. If the meeting is with your House member, then you take the lead as a constituent physician. Your member of congress should be addressed as congressman or representative (female) or senator. The tone should be informative and two-way.

5. Federal Health Care Reform: Background and talking points

- a. Background: Health care reform is not a new debate inside of CMS
  - In just the last decade, we helped incubate the state's Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Reform;
  - We informed the Colorado Congressional Delegation on the ACA without taking a position;
    - We backed the Medicaid expansion, the state-run exchange and the SIM grant; and
    - Most recently we studied and ultimately opposed Amendment 69.
- b. CMS has and will continue to support coverage for all Coloradans.
- c. While CMS has plenty of policy on health care reform (see handout), at no time has the organization laid down a hard and fast rule that any of these programs (see above) are the only way and the absolute best way to achieve our coverage goals --- we want to work with you!
- d. CMS agreed with over 100 other Colorado-based organizations on a set of process and policy principles in late 2016. While the delegation is no doubt aware of these principles and they will be included in the handout, the following points are worth noting:
  - Repeal the Affordable Care Act and related federal health policies only with a clearly identified and carefully considered replacement plan. Colorado physicians would like to give their perspective on any plan before it passes. Protecting those gains in coverage, as well as the corresponding benefits of improved access for consumers and sustainability for health care providers is a priority. Colorado's uninsured rate has dropped from 15.8% in 2011 to 6.7% in 2015, a record low (see slide in handout). Point this out visually and suggest that we would like nothing more than for a new coverage scheme to lower Colorado's uninsured rate even further.
    - Discuss protection of patients who have benefitted from the Medicaid expansion.
    - Discuss medical inflation index if Congress is going to block grant or per capita cap Medicaid and how the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) makes it difficult and unpredictable for Colorado to raise taxes to compensate for any decrease in federal funding for any program.
  - Point out the deep dysfunction in the current system and that they can be addressed by reducing administrative burdens, providing clarity about what consumers are actually getting for their health care dollar, and leveling the playing field between mega-health plans and physicians.

- e. CMS is currently in the field with a member survey to get insight and perspective on coverage policies. We will be sharing the information with you soon.

The handouts for the congressional meetings referenced in this memo will be available when you arrive in Washington. See you then.