

**FIRST CANDLE/SIDS ALLIANCE
BI-MONTHLY PUBLIC POLICY REPORT
JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2004**

The second session of the 108th Congress convened on January 20th as members returned to Washington to receive President Bush's State of the Union Address. Upon returning to Capitol Hill, lawmakers passed an omnibus spending package for fiscal year 2004 that included the bill that funds the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. The measure provided modest increases for the Health Resources and Services Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes of Health.

Looking forward to fiscal year 2005, the president sent his FY05 budget proposal to the Congress on February 2nd. The plan calls for \$2.4 trillion in federal spending (with a projected FY05 budget deficit of \$521 billion) and outlines a five-year strategy to cut the deficit in half by FY09. Discretionary spending in the budget totals \$818 billion, a 4.1% increase over FY04. However, the president requested only a .5% increase in non-defense related discretionary programs. Under the proposal, NIH would receive an increase of 2.7% percent, while the overall budgets for CDC and HRSA would be cut.

The House and Senate budget committees have already initiated hearings on the president's proposal. Members in both chambers hope to develop a congressional budget resolution by early spring. This non-binding resolution will serve as a blueprint for future congressional action on appropriations and revenue legislation.

In other health care news, the Senate rejected an effort by the Republican leadership in February to cap medical malpractice awards against obstetricians and gynecologists at \$250,000. The legislation, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) is part of the GOP's ongoing effort to limit malpractice awards for all medical specialties. The bill fell 12 votes short of the 60 needed to end a Democratic-led filibuster.

Finally, President Bush has nominated Mark McClellan to serve as the new administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). McClellan currently serves as the head of the Food and Drug Administration. A group of bipartisan Senators have threatened to delay McClellan's nomination to the CMS post because of his opposition to the re-importation of drugs from Canada.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTHS OF JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2004:

- Monitored the Federal Register and the Congressional Record for items of interest to First Candle/SIDS Alliance.
- Delivered letters requesting to testify before the House and Senate L-HHS Appropriations Subcommittees.
- Began work to ensure that First Candle/SIDS Alliance's priorities are included in the fiscal year 2005 appropriations bills.
- Attended the HHS budget briefing on the President's budget and corresponded with First Candle on priorities in the President's budget.
- Attended the Friends of NICHD meeting and corresponded with NICHD on key issues.
- Continued to correspond with Senate Fritz Hollings (D-SC) on First Candle priorities and the Death Scene Protocol Demonstration Projects at the CDC.
- Corresponded with Senator Edward Kennedy's (D-MA) office on S. 1833, a bill to improve the health of minority individuals.
- Continued preparation and planning for the First Candle Spring 2004 Day on the Hill, including correspondence with Senator Rick Santorum's office (R-PA), Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI).

ACTIVITIES FOR THE COMING MONTHS:

- Continue to monitor and report on the legislative and funding priorities of First Candle/SIDS Alliance included in the FY 2005 appropriations bills.
- Continue to work with the offices of Senator Fritz Hollings (D-SC), Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD), and Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) regarding First Candle/SIDS Alliance priorities.
- Schedule and prepare for key meetings including appropriate Hill staff and Federal officials.
- Continue working with the Public Policy Committee for greater community involvement, specifically setting agenda and logistics for Spring 2004 Day on the Hill.
- Continue to work with First Candle/SIDS Alliance on incorporating the expanded mission of research in the areas of stillbirth and miscarriage into its legislative priorities for FY 2005.

PREPARED BY:

**DALE DIRKS AND SARA ARNOLD
HEALTH AND MEDICINE COUNSEL OF WASHINGTON
507 CAPITOL COURT, N.E., SUITE 200
WASHINGTON, DC 20002**

