



# Budget advocacy: From A to Zika

BY RICH CAPPARELL, NANCY HAILPERN, AND LISA TOMLINSON

*“Action  
is the  
foundational  
key to all  
success.”*

—PABLO PICASSO



**ONE OF THE** major powers of Congress is to fund the federal government. If the process proceeds in an orderly manner, the president will send a budget in the early part of the year and Congress will use that document as a starting point. After a lot of deliberation and debate, Congress will pass 12 individual appropriations bills before October 1, when the new fiscal year begins. Out of the 12 appropriations bills that are considered, the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill has the most impact on infection prevention because it funds all agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, including: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). These agencies are responsible for most federal infection prevention programs,

including the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) and the Antibiotic Resistance (AR) Solutions Initiative.

Unfortunately, since 1996, Congress has failed to pass all the appropriations bills before the beginning of the fiscal year. If the bills are not finished on time, Congress has a number of options:

- 1. Pass a continuing resolution**—a short-term funding bill that provides Congress more time to negotiate long-term appropriations bills;
- 2. Pass an omnibus appropriation**—one very large bill encompassing all appropriations in one document;
- 3. Shut down the government** until parties can agree on how they will fund the government moving forward.

Regardless of the route to fund the government, a great deal of negotiating takes place. APIC seeks to inform members of the appropriate time to have their voice heard.

During the current Congress, there has been renewed focus on deficit reduction and zero-sum budgeting. With limited tax revenues, this generally means if one program gets an increase in funding, another program must get a reduction. This negotiating process provides an opportunity for APIC members to educate their legislators about the importance of federal infection control programs and to prevent these funds from being shifted to other programs.

## APIC ADVOCACY EFFORTS

On September 20, the APIC board of directors visited 23 congressional offices from eight different states. Members visited an array of offices from freshman members of Congress to key legislators on important committees, such as the House Ways and Means and Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committees. The main reason for these meetings was for members to urge

## CAPITOL COMMENTS

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their representatives to support necessary funding levels for NHSN and AR initiatives. Continuing Resolution negotiations were in full swing during the Capitol Hill visits, so appropriations discussions were very timely. In addition to supporting APIC priorities, these visits were a great way for board members to develop and continue relationships with their legislators. Due to continued outreach efforts by board members and the APIC Public Policy Committee, many congressional staffers were familiar with the role of infection preventionists and were able to have productive conversations on important legislative issues.

Congressional visits are a fun, energizing way to advocate; however, they are not the only way to get the message out about

infection control. Currently, under the Public Policy section of the APIC website, there is a pre-written message ready to be sent to your members of Congress. With a few key strokes, you can have a message supporting important CDC programs sent to your legislators. Chapter legislative representatives (CLR) are leading these efforts by recruiting colleagues to send these emails. Help your CLR take the lead in a competition to see which state can get the highest percentage of its members to participate. At press time, more than 1,359 APIC members have sent 4,703 messages to Congress.

### **PUBLIC POLICY WEBPAGE**

To support members in their advocacy efforts, APIC will be updating the public policy webpage. The first part of this initiative will be to update our advocacy agenda to better inform APIC members of what is happening in the policy arena. The current website highlights only some of our APIC advocacy materials but does not include coalition efforts or provide easy access to

policy-ready position papers on key priorities. The updated website will have a better representation of the issues that affect infection prevention and what APIC is doing to support them. To better accommodate viewing from mobile devices, there will be more visual content to supplement text. Finally, the public policy page will be reorganized to be more user-friendly for both members and policymakers. APIC staff will be working closely with members of the Public Policy Committee to complete this exciting new project.

For more information on any of these initiatives, please contact the APIC Public Policy team at [legislation@apic.org](mailto:legislation@apic.org). For the latest information on infection-related public policy developments, subscribe to the APIC Action E-list. 

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