

Federal Legislative Update for Senior Issues (B) Task Force
2021 Interim In Lieu of the Fall National Meeting
30 November 2021

SHIP funding: The federal government is operating under FY 2021 levels. That means SHIP funding is at the FY 2021 level of \$55 million.

The House did pass its FY 2022 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill on July 29 and it included an increase to SHIP to a level of \$57,115,000. The Senate has not acted on its appropriation bills.

Congress is looking at doing a short CR (continuing resolution) to keep the government funded thru December.

Reconciliation: As you all know the House passed the reconciliation bill on Nov. 19.

It includes language to provide for coverage of hearing aids under Medicare Part B for individuals with severe or profound hearing loss in one or both



ears, once every five years, and if furnished through a written order by a physician, qualified audiologist, hearing aid professional, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or clinical nurse specialist, qualified to write such order by the state.

It is unclear when the Senate will consider this measure and if any of the hearing provisions may be changed.

Medicare Cards: The NAIC has been made aware of an issue of delayed Medicare cards. Basically, the Social Security Admin. (SSA) mails out (usually initiated by a phone call) the application and receives and processes the application, then sends to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to send the Medicare card to the enrollee. Since many SSA field offices have been closed due to the Pandemic, almost all applications are being mailed to seniors, then they must mail the application and supporting materials back to SSA.



CMS and SSA have found that serious mail delays (3-4 weeks for each mailing) has resulted in significant delays in the final application being received by SSA. The mail delivery and the slow down at USPS seems to be the main issue and CMS and SSA are looking at ways to address this, but this may take some time to resolve.

While applicants can download the application, so that can cut out part of the process, there are many seniors are not comfortable doing that. However, they must mail in the completed application with supporting materials. The only other option is to drop off at a field office, but those are still closed. The NAIC continues to monitor the matter and is in communication with SSA and CMS.

That concludes the federal legislative update to the Task Force.