



No Time to Waste

By Michael F. Conlan

A Congress is always a slave to the calendar, but every four years there is a date that looms above all others—the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. That is when we choose a president, and in 2008 that date is Nov. 4, Election Day.

Every even numbered year limits the amount of time available for legislative action, but a presidential year cuts time shorter still. Working backward from November, Congress has to pick a cutoff date when to close up shop and campaign full time. For the entire House and one-third of the Senate, their jobs are on the line.

Then there are the Republican and Democratic conventions to ratify the victors of the long primary season. The Democrats gather in Denver from Aug. 25–28. Just three days later, the Republicans meet over Labor Day, Sept. 1–4, in Minneapolis-St. Paul. So, Congress can't be in session around those dates—most lawmakers will be in attendance.

Then throw in the “normal” summer and holiday breaks, a few long weekends, and you can see the actual days Congress could work, if it wanted to, are quite slimmed down. Even on those days, opportunities for bipartisan cooperation and good government are fewer than ever in a highly charged presidential election year.

All that means is that legislation that doesn't get passed early in the year, before the July 4th break most likely, has an extremely challenging road to enactment in the dwindling days of the 110th Congress.

The compressed congressional calendar makes NCPA's annual legislative conference more timely and important than ever. This year's 40th Annual National Conference on National Legislation and Government Affairs is scheduled for May 19-21 at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill—the same venue as last year.

The legislative conference is your opportunity to gain insight into how Uncle Sam will affect your business in years to come. You'll learn from political analysts, industry experts, and fellow pharmacists on how to effectively

engage in the political process to help build the “community pharmacy majority” necessary for legislative success.


Congress needs to understand the crucial health care role you play in helping to contain costs while ensuring quality care. Make your views known on Capitol Hill.

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Key members of the Senate and House of Representatives, as well as government officials and political insiders, will be on hand to share their views on targeted independent community pharmacy issues with NCPA legislative conference participants.

This is your opportunity to help educate your senators and representative and let them know firsthand what is happening to your patients and your pharmacy—a job that only you can do. Be an insider and discuss independent community pharmacy issues on Capitol Hill with the people that can make things happen or stop them.

Last year, 14 lawmakers spoke at our conference, including the chairman and two subcommittee chairmen of committees that oversee Medicare and Medicaid, a pharmacy owner, and the only pharmacist currently serving in Congress.

Information about the upcoming legislative conference will be posted on the NCPA Web site (www.ncpanet.org) soon. 

Michael F. Conlan is editor of America's Pharmacist.