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Issues - Needle Exchange - Coburn Amendment

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FAX TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

TO: TODD SUMMERS
FAX #: 632-1096
FROM: Julio C. Abreu, (Government Affairs, ext. 3021)
DATE: Sept. 4
RE: Coburn needle exchange amendment
NUMBER OF PAGES (including cover): _____

I am sending you a copy of the Coburn language restricting needle exchange that we anticipated on the Labor, HHS Appropriations bill. It is unclear when the needle exchange section of the appropriations bill comes up during the discussion of the bill (probably later in the debate rather than earlier).

We are still trying to get a handle if a voice vote is a likely scenario - Coburn may want to score this for his constituency - or if we should proceed with language that would mitigate his amendment. It does appear that Chairman Porter is inclined to work with folks to preserve his mark in conference. However, the Senate is not assured of doing nothing on this issue - although that is the likely outcome as of today. This scenario adds to our frustration.

We should review the language and potential scenarios to inform our decision on how to proceed. Thank you and I look forward to discussing this with you.

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AMENDMENT TO H.R. 2284

OFFERED BY MR. COBURN OF OKLAHOMA

At the end of the bill, insert after the last section
(preceding the short title) the following section:

1 SEC. 516. Notwithstanding any other provision of
2 this Act, none of the funds made available in this Act may
3 be used to carry out or promote any program of distribut-
4 ing sterile needles for the hypodermic injection of any ille-
5 gal drug.

September 3, 1997

Amendment Alert:

Coburn amendment to HR 2264

Staff Contact: Andrea Miles 5-2701

The amendment prohibits any funds made available through HR 2264 from being used to carry out or promote any program which distributes sterile needles for illegal drug use. Since 1988, federal policy has prohibited use of federal dollars for needle or syringe exchange programs. However, such policy has not been followed and in some cases has been ignored. Coburn amendment would strengthen and reinforce current federal policy by explicitly stating that federal dollars shall not finance needle exchange programs.

Teen drug use has been growing steadily over the past few years, especially among "hard" drugs. Heroin use among 12-17 year olds has grown 320% since 1991 and 600% since 1964.

A recent poll has shown that 60% of all registered voters oppose federal funding of needle exchange programs. 88% of Americans have a concern that NEPs will cause a public health hazard as a result of poorly discarded needles, as well as cause an increase in crime and drug use. More specifically, 94% of black voters in general are very concerned about the possible negative impact in their communities.