THE FIRST 100 DAYS ARE DONE. WHAT IS NEXT?

On April 30, President Joe Biden celebrated his 100th day in the White House. Virtually each day of this Presidency has focused on the pandemic, both the health care and the economic aspects. Today we have surpassed 145 million Americans who have received at least one vaccine dose. Close to 40 percent of all Americans have completed their vaccinations. The President’s goal is for our nation to fully celebrate the 4th of July.

The legislative highlight for the President so far was the enactment into law of the American Rescue Plan Act, an almost $2 trillion package to address lingering economic aftermaths of the pandemic. Previously, Benjamin Rose wrote an analysis of the Act and its important provisions for older adults and their families.

Next for consideration will be the American Jobs Plan—also known as the “infrastructure bill”—and the American Families Plan. There are numerous important features in the American Jobs Plan, but a centerpiece is the President’s call for $400 billion to be spent on home and community-based services (HCBS) and non-institutional care. It is intended to address workforce issues such as inadequate pay for persons providing this care and working to reduce the waiting list for HCBS. Other key features include making the Money Follows the Person program permanent, reducing the cost of broadband internet and building broadband infrastructure, improving current public housing and building new housing, creating a network of small business incubators and upgrading research capacities, upgrading schools and VA hospitals, and producing more traditional infrastructure upgrades to highways, bridges, and airports.

On Wednesday, as part of his first speech to a joint session of Congress, the President unveiled his American Families Plan. Among its many features is a strong new family caregiver paid leave plan: by year 10 of the program, twelve weeks of paid leave would be guaranteed by the federal government. The program will provide workers up to $4,000 a month in replacement wages.

More details on both proposals can be found on the White House website, whitehouse.gov (American Jobs Plan, American Families Plan).
The President’s proposals must now be put into legislative language by the House and Senate, a process that has started in earnest. Congress may change what the President has proposed. One of the most talked-about proposals relates to lowering the age of eligibility for Medicare to 60. Also related to Medicare is another form of expansion to include coverage for dental and vision services. Finally, one of the proposed “pay-fors” for the Families Plan is to allow the federal government to negotiate for the price of prescription drugs provided through Medicare plans.

The weeks ahead promise to be active ones in Washington and Benjamin Rose will continue to keep you up to date.

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH PROCLAMATION

President Biden signed a proclamation recognizing May as Older Americans Month. The proclamation acknowledges the significant impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on older adults and celebrates all older Americans and the key role they play in sharing wisdom and experience that inform today’s decisions and actions, and fostering the connection and engagement that build strong, resilient communities.

Read the full proclamation at whitehouse.gov.

MAKE A GIFT

We need your help to protect and care for the most vulnerable people in our community - older adults, adults with disabilities and caregivers - during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please make your gift today at benrose.org/donate.