



# Advocacy in ACTION

Fighting for People with Arthritis



## Advocacy in Action

January 13, 2015

Volume 2, Issue 1

### Massachusetts Preserves Vital Support Through Co-Pay Cards and Assistance

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick has signed legislation to ensure that people with arthritis may continue using co-pay cards -- which provide discounts on prescription drugs -- and other forms of co-pay assistance through 2017. This legislation is a significant step in the right direction for people managing their arthritis through medications, as a Massachusetts 1988 anti-kickback act had prohibited pharmaceutical companies from issuing any rebates to consumers to reduce their co-payment, co-insurance or other out of pocket cost-sharing obligations (Massachusetts was the only state to have such a prohibition).

In 2012, the anti-kickback act was changed to allow pharmacies and pharmaceutical companies to offer co-pay assistance to those who needed help paying for medications. The Arthritis Foundation offered support and advocacy for this new law permitting co-pay cards, which had been scheduled to expire in 2015.

People enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid are still unable to use co-pay cards because the federal program guidelines forbid their use.

Moving forward, the Arthritis Foundation will partner with advocates and the Massachusetts legislature to ensure that these important co-pay cards and other forms of assistance remain available to state residents well after 2017.

---

## **The 114th Congress Is Officially in Session**

Members of Congress were sworn in a week ago, officially kicking off the 114th Congress. Rep. John Boehner (R-OH) was re-elected as Speaker of the House, and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) took the helm as Majority Leader of the Senate. This is the first time Republicans have controlled both houses of Congress since 2006.

Arthritis Foundation staff spent the day on Capitol Hill, greeting new and returning members of Congress and informing them about the Arthritis Foundation's services and major priorities. Throughout the coming months, The Foundation will continue to welcome representatives and senators to the new Congress, introduce them to our work and important legislative issues, and recruit them as members of the Congressional Arthritis Caucus. Keep friends and family up to date on arthritis issues! [Forward this link and ask them to become an E-Advocate!](#)

## **Advocacy Summit Registration Open!**

Register now for the 2015 Advocacy Summit, happening March 23-24 at the Double Tree Crystal City in Arlington, VA. For the first time ever, the Arthritis Foundation's premier advocacy event has **no registration fee!** Bringing passionate advocates from all over the country to meet together in our nation's capital, Summit attendees receive expert advocacy training, learn about priority advocacy issues and meet with their elected officials and staff. The Advocacy Summit also includes a Kids' Summit, which provides children with arthritis and their siblings the opportunity to learn about advocacy and meet new friends. Questions? [Please visit our website](#) or contact us at [advocacy@arthritis.org](mailto:advocacy@arthritis.org). We hope to see you in Washington, DC!

## **Arthritis Foundation Asks Federal Government for Critical Patient Protections in Health Exchange Insurance Plans**

In December 2014, the Arthritis Foundation submitted a comment letter asking the Obama administration to implement additional patient protections for Health Exchange plans operating in 2016.

The Arthritis Foundation urged the administration to consider a few of the biggest health care challenges facing those living with arthritis. Specific comments included:

- Patients should have access to the drugs that work best for them, even if those drugs aren't covered by their health plan.
  - Patients should have access to a wide network of providers so they can find the best
-

doctor to manage their health conditions.

Increased transparency for insurance plans is also critical, and health plans should be required to make information about all out-of-pocket medication expenses readily available so that people can make informed decisions about what insurance to purchase. Additionally, stable patients should not be required to go through drug authorization programs like step therapy more than once.

[A complete copy of the letter can be viewed here.](#)

### **Arthritis Foundation CEO Ann Palmer Named to Board of National Health Council**

The National Health Council (NHC), a premier patient advocacy organization, recently named Arthritis Foundation CEO Ann Palmer to their board of directors. The NHC is made up of over 100 national health-related organizations and provides a united voice for people with chronic diseases and disabilities, their family members and caregivers.

*This is a publication from the Arthritis Foundation Advocacy and Access Department  
For questions, please contact us at [advocacy@arthritis.org](mailto:advocacy@arthritis.org)*

