

NDD Town Hall
September 11, 2012
3:00 – 4:30 PM
National Education Association, Chanin Auditorium
1201 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C.

Summary

The NDD Summit hosted a Town Hall for 450 advocates to learn more about the administration's position on sequestration. Jon Carson of the White House Office of Public Engagement reviewed strategies for avoiding sequestration, and stressed the importance of united planning, united consensus, and united action when defending nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs. He stressed that President Obama will accept only a "balanced approach" to deficit reduction that includes necessary increases in revenue as an alternative to sequestration. He advised that an "exempt me" advocacy strategy—whereby organizations seek carve outs for certain programs—is ineffective and counterproductive to the overall debate, as the President will not support anything less than a balanced approach.

Carson presented examples of effective grassroots advocacy, and stressed the importance of educating the public about the implications of the sequestration to move them to act. Of course, many Americans are unaware of the extent to which the federal government supports their way of life, and they therefore do not understand the importance of NDD spending. Advocates must demonstrate to the public that cuts made to NDD programs have very real relevance to and consequences for them.

Robert Gordon of the Office of Management & Budget (OMB) provided background on sequestration, explaining more clearly what it is and how it came to be. He stressed that sequestration would have disastrous consequences for national security and vital domestic investments. He stated that President Obama hopes to avoid sequestration altogether, recognizing that under sequester funding for NDD programs would fall to unacceptably low levels. Gordon added that OMB's report on sequestration implementation will be available at the end of this week (September 14) and will show in great detail the impending cuts to programs.

A brief question and answer session followed. Several important points of clarification were provided by both speakers.

- Agencies will have little flexibility in applying sequestration's cuts, because the law mandates these cuts be made at the program, project and activity (PPA) level.
- President Obama will veto any bill to replace sequestration that is not a "balanced approach" that includes revenue.

- The FY2013 Continuing Resolution (CR) does not delay sequestration. If sequestration occurs, cuts will be applied to the CR levels.

At the conclusion of the administration's presentation, Emily Holubowich, Executive Director of the Coalition for Health Funding shared more about the NDD Summit and its past, present, and future advocacy activities. The presentation is available online for viewing here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzya8qzj1pc>

If you wish to find more information about sequestration, its effects, and advocacy tools to avoid it, visit the NDD United hub here:

http://publichealthfunding.org/index.php/ndd_united1/