

President's Message

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July has been an exciting month for employee benefit professionals, and it's not even over. I participated in the NAHU Fly-In to Washington, DC, along with CAHU member Bill Webb, Jr. and Candler Bumgarner. There was a reception Tuesday evening (July 14) for over 1,000 agents from five different trade associations, followed by a general meeting Wednesday morning where we received advice on how to effectively lobby our elected representatives. We roamed the halls of the Capitol and met with legislators to express our support for healthcare reform and our concerns over some of the ideas for accomplishing it. Our main goals were to reinforce the value of agents and brokers and oppose any government-run public plan option that would unfairly compete with the private health insurance market. The following brief articles from the July 16th online issue of *NAHU Newswire* provide a good perspective on our visit and concerns.

I look forward to seeing each of you in August when we'll learn about Medical Tourism from David Boucher, President of Companion Global Healthcare.

NAHU in the News

Insurance trade groups send more than 1,000 lobbyists to Capitol Hill.

[CQ HealthBeat](#) (7/16, subscription required) reports, "Just as Congress moves into high gear on health overhaul legislation, insurance trade groups with a big stake in the outcome are packing the halls of the Capitol with members making the case against a public plan to their home-state politicians. Wednesday saw the arrival on the Hill of more than 1,000 members of four associations whose members are deeply involved in the private health insurance process: the Association of Health Insurance Advisors, National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors, Council of Insurance Agents and Brokers of America, and the National Association of Health Underwriters." These lobbies are "often influential people in their communities who may have longtime ties with members of Congress." However, CQ notes that "it might seem the brokers and agents are fighting an uphill battle, given the support of congressional Democrats as well as President Obama for the public option."

Obama's support for competition seen as disguised efforts at government expansion in healthcare.

The [Chicago Tribune](#) (7/16) columnist Steve Champan writes that although President Obama says he favors "more competition in health insurance," his "real enthusiasm" is for government expansion. Chapman points out that the Obama Administration has shown "no interest" in removing certain barriers to competition, such as "letting consumers in one state buy coverage offered in other states." Nor has the Administration shown interest in "fostering competition" in existing government programs. "Don't hold your breath waiting for the Administration" to allow Medicare, Medicaid or SCHIP recipients to "select a voucher to buy private coverage," Chapman remarks. He draws an analogy between "the near-collapse of General Motors and Chrysler" and high health insurance premiums, noting that both "came about because competition worked

very well at serving consumers and punishing poorly run companies." And in both cases, he concludes, the Obama Administration "proposes the same solution: more federal spending and a bigger federal role."