

U.S. FORUM CONNECTION #156, DECEMBER 2016

This publication is intended for your information about issues important to education, women and children. How you choose to use the information included here is up to you.

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WHAT PASSED AND BECAME LAW (The summaries below are taken from the Congressional record.)

1. S.1867 International Megan's Law to Prevent Child Exploitation and Other Sexual Crimes Through Advanced Notification of Traveling Sex Offenders
2. S.1482 Need-Based Educational Aid Act of 2015 -- This bill amends the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 to extend through FY2022 the antitrust exemption that allows institutions of higher education that admit all students on a need-blind basis to enter or attempt to enter into agreements among themselves regarding the administration of need-based financial aid.
3. S.612 This bill amends the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 to extend through FY2022 the antitrust exemption that allows institutions of higher education that admit all students on a need-blind basis to enter or attempt to enter into agreements among themselves regarding the administration of need-based financial aid.
4. S.524 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 -- HHS must advance education and awareness regarding the risk of abuse of prescription opioids if they are not taken as prescribed. (Opioids are drugs with effects similar to opium, such as certain pain medications and heroin. A more complete summary (Can be found at Congress.gov.)
5. H.R. 2576 Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act - This bill amends the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) to revise the process and requirements for evaluating and determining whether regulatory control of a chemical is warranted.

Passed the House but was not acted on in the Senate.

H.R.5587 Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act

This bill reauthorizes through FY2022 the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, divides career and technical education (CTE) students into CTE concentrators and CTE participants, and revises requirements for within-state funding allocations.

STUDENT LOAN RELIEF

Of the five or more bills to provide financial relief for those with substantial student loan obligations none made it out of committee and to the floor of either chamber for a vote.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Drug patents apply from the moment that a new drug is discovered and the patent protection is good for twenty years. In fact, the time when a drug is on the market and protected by a patent is considerably less than twenty years because the average time it takes to gain approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is eight years. After the patent protection expires generic versions of popular drugs which are much less costly are manufactured and sold. Drug companies often extend patent life by combining two or more drugs on which the patent has expired thus gaining a new patent. If one knows that a prescribed drug is a combination of cheaper drugs, it is possible to get prescriptions for the each of the component drugs and save a considerable amount of money.

Recently the cost of prescription drugs has been skyrocketing. The cost of two medications in particular is of great concern as these medications are the difference between life and death. One is insulin in treating diabetes and the second is the epipen which delivers epinephrine to an individual in the throes of a life threatening allergic reaction.

EpiPens cost less than \$100 in France, slightly over \$200 in Germany, and a two-pack retails for \$615 to \$650 in New York City. The production cost for EpiPens was only \$57 a shot when Mylan (the current producer) took over sales in 2007. To further raise the cost, the pens have a limited shelf life, but the person needing the medication must keep a viable pen on hand in case of emergency. The pens in the US are only available in packs of two and have a shelf life of 12-18 months before they become ineffective. This means that often pens become ineffective prior to need and have to be replaced without being used.

Insulin costs have also increased considerably regardless of the type of insulin being used. Because there are a number of insulin medications on the market a cost comparison is beyond the scope of this publication.

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

With the discovery of excessive lead in the water in Flint, Michigan, the question arises “how safe is the water that I use daily?” Lead in water can come from several sources. The pipes themselves can be made of lead or the pipes can be joined together using a lead solder. Lead pipes were commonly used well into the 20th century, so if you are living in a home that was built before 1920 there is a good possibility that, unless the plumbing has been replaced, the plumbing in the house is lead or is joined by lead solder. The other source of lead in drinking water is pipes in the community water supply which were either made of lead or soldered together with lead solder. You can ask your local water supplier about whether or not your water has been tested for lead and if it has been tested request the results of the test. Even if the local water has been tested and does not contain appreciable lead, your tap water may contain unacceptable amounts of lead. You can have water in your house, school or other facility tested at a laboratory which does this type of analysis.

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FORUM WEB SITE: <http://www.usforumdkg.org/>

CONTACT ADDRESSES FOR GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

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Email access and addresses

<http://www.house.gov/> for members of the House of Representatives <http://www.senate.gov/> for members of the U.S. Senate
White House [1-202-456-1111](tel:1-202-456-1111)

FIVE CONSTITUENT CONTACTS WILL CAUSE A LEGISLATOR TO PAY SERIOUS ATTENTION TO A GIVEN ISSUE.