



Congressional recesses provide an excellent opportunity for you to visit your legislators and their staff in their home offices (or invite them to your own agencies), reintroduce yourselves, and educate them about the make-up and needs of your community.

As a result of the Budget Control Act, automatic cuts (through “sequestration”) will reduce federal discretionary spending programs (domestic and defense) by 7.8% in January, 2013. We expect that there will be attempts by Congress to come together after the November elections or at the beginning of the next Congress to avert these broad spending cuts. It is with this background that it is critical during your meetings with Members of Congress for you to validate the importance of the publicly-funded domestic human service programs upon which your community relies. Your legislators need to know what is at stake as they contemplate cutting the programs that support your agencies and serve your communities.

In addition to your own communal priorities, given the opportunity, we encourage you to ask your Members of Congress to cosponsor or support of the following pieces of legislation, all of which are important to the national Jewish community and the vulnerable people we serve:

•**Cosponsor the Responding to Urgent needs of Survivors of the Holocaust (RUSH) Act** (S. 3358 and H.R. 2786). The RUSH Act amends the Older Americans Act to include a focus on Holocaust survivor social service needs and on the costs associated with providing kosher or other specialized meals to older adults. We encourage members of Congress to reauthorize the Older Americans Act and include the RUSH Act as an integral part. Although Holocaust Survivors face the same daily challenges as other aging adults, they may be more acutely impacted by premature or unnecessary institutionalization, because for Survivors in particular the loss of privacy, control and autonomy, along with certain triggers, increases the likelihood of re-traumatization.

•**Cosponsor the Behavioral Health Information Technology Act (BHIT)** (HR. 6043 and S. 539). The BHIT legislation has the potential to transform the behavioral health sector through health information technology initiatives that will maximize efficiency and play a vital role in saving lives through better coordination between primary care and behavioral health providers. The populations targeted in this legislation are among the most vulnerable with exceedingly high rates of cancer, heart disease, diabetes and asthma, in addition to their behavioral health issues. [Read more.](#)

•**Cosponsor the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act** (H.R. 3423 and S. 1872). This will encourage and assist individuals and families to save private funds for the purpose of supporting individuals with disabilities to maintain health, independence, and quality of life. This legislation creates a new subsection within 529 qualified tuition programs for qualified disability expenses, including education, housing, transportation, employment support, health prevention and wellness, and assistive technology and personal support.

•**Increase funding in the FY 2013 Homeland Security Appropriations bill for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)**. With the economy slowing and the unemployment rate at unprecedented levels, the Emergency Food and Shelter Program remains one of the quickest streams of Federal assistance to thousands of communities struggling with high unemployment and poverty. Nearly 100 Jewish agencies count on the EFSP program to provide critical stability to individuals and families at risk of food insecurity and homelessness. We seek a return of \$150 million to the EFSP program in FY2013.

•**Ratify in the Senate: UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (Treaty 112-7). This international treaty seeks to promote, protect, fulfill, and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities, thereby ensuring that they can live full, satisfying and productive lives. Based on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a wide-ranging civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities seeks similar achievements throughout the world through international cooperation and sharing of ideas and implementation methods.

We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to showcase the valuable service your agencies provide for the community. If you have any questions about summer advocacy or to learn more about any of these pieces of legislation, please feel free to contact Shelley Rood at (202) 736-5880.