

## ***STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING HEALTH CARE FINANCING SYSTEMS***

Due to the Balanced Budget requirements unless there is a surplus in the budget each item that is introduced must demonstrate a cost commensurate to the cost of the new legislation. To secure the legislation a cost analysis must be done by the Congressional Research services and then an offset must be identified that will occur should the bill become a law. Therefore, the role of committee structure changes somewhat. It is important to assure that money is available in the proposed budget either by the President or the Ranking committee chairs of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. It would be best if it can be a part of both budget processes. That would almost guarantee its' passage.

The Chairman of Appropriations becomes important in that they too could identify an offset by using money already in a Department's budget to secure funds for the new proposal or a portion of that new proposal. Those "earmarks" are often controversial because the Department's budget has several already identified priorities. Earmarks limit the ability of the Department to fulfill all the priorities established. If the use of the earmark is utilized, those monies are set aside for only one year. Each year it will require the Chairman continue to direct those monies to meet that particular need. Each committee identifies how it has reached certain positions through the use of a conference report. Advocates can often identify ways to implement the proposed programs that may not be an actual part of the committee proceedings. It is often here that "Congressional Intent" is identified. Report language can be very powerful when defending the importance of a program and in the subsequent rules and regulations required to written to enforce such laws and programs. Each of these are important steps to seeing a piece of legislation do what it was designed to do.

Further, because the states have been mandated to provide certain services to its' population and the entire amount of money to provide those mandates has not been forthcoming from the federal government, states have found themselves in a budget crisis. The Congress looks more favorably on providing options to the states to fulfill their obligations. The National Governor's Association and the National Conference of State Legislators keep a watchful eye on how Congress proceeds. Because there are fifty independent states, each state approaches their systems and populations to serve differently. Health care is at crisis proportions in most states. When the economy is down more people need the help of the states to survive. There are more people applying for Welfare and Medicaid. The more people find themselves out of work the more complex and burdensome the mandates become. The more people are out of work, the less taxes to support state programs are available. Remember that many federal programs are matching programs. The states must come up with a state matching fund before the federal government will grant them federal monies.