

An HIV/AIDS advocate's guide to the deficit reduction process

Prepared by the HIV Health Care Access Working Group &
the AIDS Budget and Appropriations Coalition

September 2011

Background:

What is deficit reduction?

Right now, the federal government spends more money than it brings in through revenue

The difference in spending and revenue has resulted in a deficit now over \$14 trillion

Congress and the President have agreed to reduce this deficit (Budget Control Act)

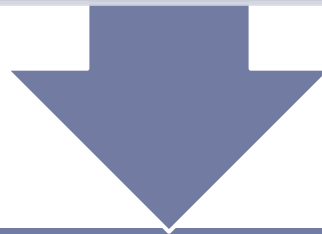


Background:

How could deficit reduction affect HIV/AIDS programs?

Deficit reduction will mean reduced spending on federal programs

A fair, balanced approach must include revenue increases



Reducing the deficit solely through spending cuts would harm essential health programs

Ryan White Program

Prevention Funding

Entitlement Programs
(Medicaid & Medicare)

Background: The Budget Control Act of 2011*

Step 1 (complete)

Debt ceiling increased (meaning, Congress allowed the U.S. to continue paying its bills)

Immediate spending cuts for defense and non-defense discretionary programs

Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and certain other low-income entitlement programs not cut for now (“exempted” programs)

* Sept. 8th—President Obama added payment for the Jobs Bill to the equation

Step 2

Bipartisan joint “super committee” to recommend additional \$1.2 - \$1.5 trillion in reductions

Super committee can recommend changes to taxes (revenue), entitlement programs, and discretionary spending

Automatic spending cuts (or a combination of super committee changes and automatic cuts) if deficit reduction target not met by December 2011 deadline (8% defense and 4% non-defense)

Automatic spending cuts would not affect Medicaid, Social Security and other entitlement programs (Medicare cuts are limited)

Background:

Dates & deadlines for deficit reduction actions



Background:

The 12 “super committee” members

3 Senate Democrats

*Co-chair

Patty
Murray*
(WA)

Max Baucus
(MT)

John Kerry
(MA)

3 Senate Republicans

John Kyl
(AZ)

Pat Toomey
(PA)

Rob
Portman
(OH)

3 House Republicans

*Co-chair

Jeb
Hensarling*
(TX-5th)

Dave Camp
(MI-4th)

Fred Upton
(MI-6th)

3 House Democrats

James
Clyburn
(SC-6th)

Xavier
Becerra
(CA-31st)

Chris
Van Hollen
(MD-8th)

Messaging:

The HIV community's deficit reduction priorities

Deficit reduction must include revenue increases

- A fair and balanced approach is necessary—it can't be all cuts

Protect vulnerable populations and funding for health and HIV programs

- Cuts to these programs mean higher rates of infection, worse health outcomes, and higher health care costs in the long run

Protect Medicaid and Medicare

- They provide health care for millions of Americans, including people living with HIV/AIDS
- Cutting federal spending on Medicaid just shifts costs to states and consumers

Continue to fund health care reforms that will improve quality and cost-effectiveness in delivery of care

- Cuts to reform programs are a lost opportunity to improve care and lower costs
-



What you can do:

Contact your Representative & 2 Senators

If you have a Representative or Senator on the super committee, take advantage of this unique opportunity to make your voice heard

If none of your members of Congress are on the super committee, ask your own members to weigh in with the super committee before October 14th



What you can do:

Schedule an in-district meeting

Many members of Congress are in their home states and districts during “recess” (Sept. 26th-30th) (additional recess dates [here](#))

This is a great opportunity to meet in person with your members or their staff

Follow these simple steps to set up an “in-district” meeting...



Step 1: Identify your Senators and Representative



To begin:

Go to [Congress.org](http://www.congress.org)
Enter your ZIP code

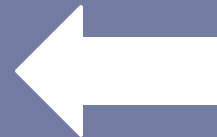


Step 1: Identify your Senators and Representative



Next:

If necessary, enter
your street address



Step 2:

Find your members' district office(s)



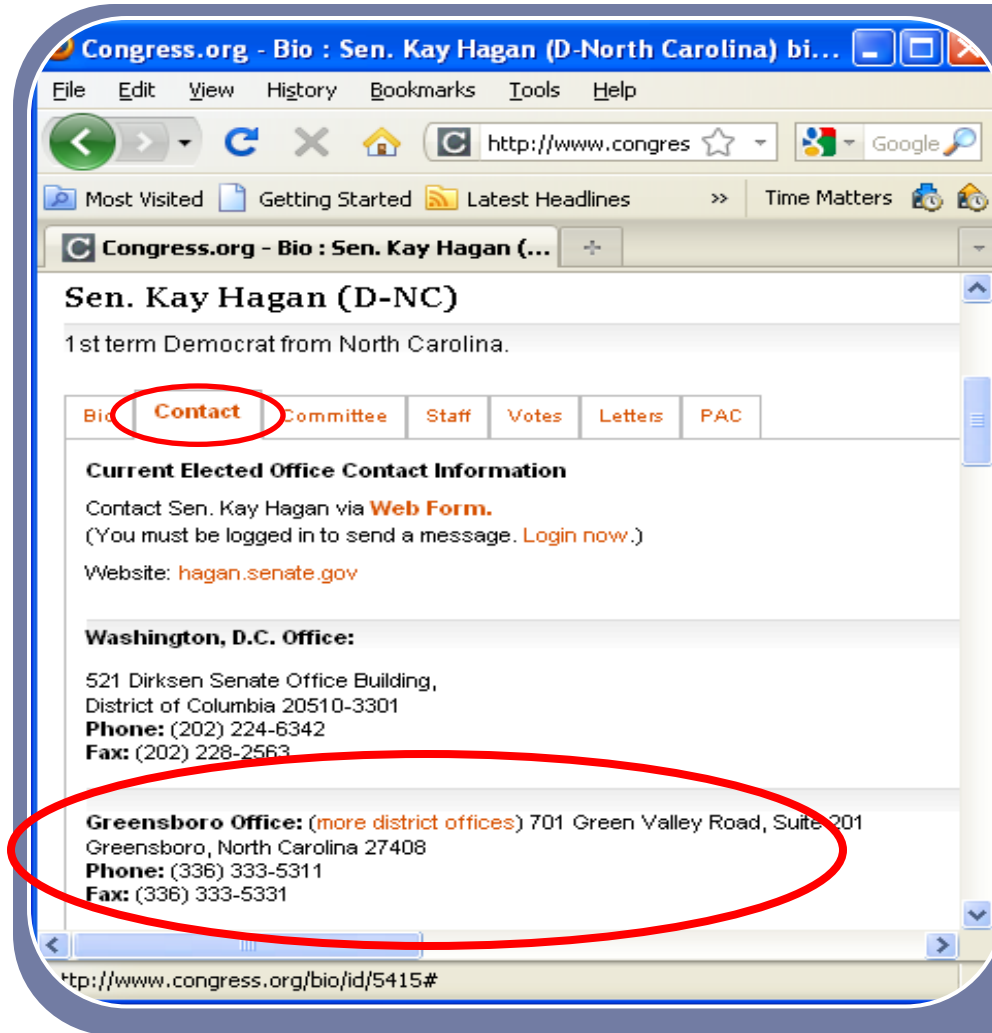
Next:

Click each member's name
to access their contact info



Step 2:

Find your members' district office(s)



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the bio page for Sen. Kay Hagan (D-NC) on Congress.org. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.congress.org/bio/id/5415#>. The page title is "Congress.org - Bio : Sen. Kay Hagan (D-North Carolina) bi...". The browser's menu bar includes File, Edit, View, History, Bookmarks, Tools, and Help. The address bar contains navigation buttons and the URL. The browser's toolbar shows "Most Visited", "Getting Started", "Latest Headlines", and "Time Matters". The page content includes a navigation menu with tabs for "Bio", "Contact", "Committee", "Staff", "Votes", "Letters", and "PAC". The "Contact" tab is circled in red. Below the navigation menu, the page displays "Sen. Kay Hagan (D-NC)" and "1st term Democrat from North Carolina." Under the heading "Current Elected Office Contact Information", there is a link to "Web Form" and a note that users must be logged in to send a message. The website URL is hagan.senate.gov. The "Washington, D.C. Office:" section lists the address: 521 Dirksen Senate Office Building, District of Columbia 20510-3301, with phone number (202) 224-6342 and fax number (202) 228-2563. The "Greensboro Office:" section is circled in red and lists the address: 701 Green Valley Road, Suite 201, Greensboro, North Carolina 27408, with phone number (336) 333-5311 and fax number (336) 333-5331. The browser's status bar at the bottom shows the URL <http://www.congress.org/bio/id/5415#>.



Find district office info
under the “**Contact**” tab



Step 3: Schedule a meeting

- Identify yourself as a constituent
- Ask to speak to the scheduler

Call



- The office might ask you to send a written request for a meeting
- If so, you can mail or fax in a short letter

Write



- Call again the week of the meeting to confirm that you'll be coming
- If you're bringing other people, tell the office how many are coming

Confirm



Planning your meeting:

Tips for an effective congressional visit

Tell your story

Get your member's attention by making it personal

Describe why the issues are important to you as a person

“The Ask”

Tell your member in simple terms what action you want her to take (support this, oppose that)

End with “Can I count on your support on these issues?”

Keep it short

Stick to the topic

Acknowledge that your member and their staff are busy, and thank them for their time




One last thing: Follow up

After your meeting, send a thank-you letter to your member or the staff person you met with

Thank him/her for taking time to meet with you

Express your hope that the member will support programs that serve people living with HIV/AIDS throughout the deficit reduction process

Provide your contact information in case the member or staff person has any additional questions



Can't do a meeting?

Other advocacy opportunities



Call or write (email/fax) to your members of Congress & the super committee



Submit a letter to the editor @ your local or state newspaper



Educate other constituents at town hall meetings, health fairs, or other events



Use the HIV community's 4 deficit reduction principles as talking points



Additional resources



[Families USA](#) is a great source of information and advocacy tips & alerts. They have a special section all about the deficit reduction super committee!



AIDS United posts HIV-specific alerts and other advocacy opportunities, including actions related to deficit reduction. Check out their [weekly policy updates](#) for the latest info.



The Treatment Access Expansion Project website hosts a [library](#) of formal HIV health policy comment letters that are helpful when you're looking for lots of detail.



The deficit reduction super committee (formally called the “Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction”) recently launched a [website](#) that includes a [link](#) to send comments directly to the committee.



Questions or feedback from your advocacy activities? Contact us!

Grassroots Contacts

Dorothee Alsentzer

Treatment Access Expansion Project
dalsentzer@law.harvard.edu

Jessica Terlikowski

AIDS United
jterlikowski@aidsunited.org

