



**To:** NQF Board of Directors  
**From:** Ann Greiner  
**Re:** NQF/SFQ Congressional Outreach  
**Date:** November 25, 2013

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## BOARD DISCUSSION

This memo provides an overview of Congressional outreach efforts since the September 2013 Board meeting. As stated in the last Board memo, NQF continues to pursue the following two goals in concert with the Stand for Quality (SFQ) coalition:

- **Securing continued funding:** Enact legislation that provides multi-year (preferably 5-year) funding for NQF activities at current law levels (\$30m/year) plus support for measure development (\$20m/year) and evaluation (\$5m/year).
- **Maintaining NQF's quality measurement role:** Ensure that any Medicare policy proposals – including SGR proposals – maintain NQF's current roles and responsibilities related to quality measurement review, endorsement and multi-stakeholder activities.

These two goals are becoming even more closely related as funding for the SFQ bill is folded into the SGR comprehensive reform proposals.

NQF and SFQ are making progress against the first goal focused on funding, but are unlikely to know the outcome until the end of 2013 or the first quarter of 2014. The timing depends upon when Congress addresses SGR and whether it is an update to the current program or comprehensive physician payment reform.

With regard to the second goal, Congress has been focused on physician payment reform. The SGR bill that advanced out of the Energy & Commerce (E&C) Committee (7/31/13) challenges NQF's current role in statute. The Senate Finance Committee/Ways and Means Committee SGR reform discussion draft (10/30/13) appears to build on existing statute and to preserve NQF's current role but not as explicitly as we would like. The Senate Finance "mark" or bill narrative (due out on 12/10/13) and subsequent bill language will provide needed clarity. NQF and SFQ are working hard to try and ensure that NQF's current role is maintained going forward.

More details about our progress and challenges related to the goals above follow.

## **SECURING BOTH CONTINUED FUNDING AND NQF'S CURRENT ROLE**

As you likely recall, Senator Amy Klobuchar agreed to introduce the SFQ bill (see the attached one-page summary) contingent on identifying a Republican co-sponsor. We have identified a Republican (Senator Toomey) who is very supportive of the policy but is also adamant that the bill be paid for through an offset. Congressional staff has been working hard to identify an offset that is "non-controversial" – difficult under any scenario but particularly hard with NQF's diverse membership.

On a related and parallel track, the staffs from the two proposed, lead co-sponsors (Klobuchar and Toomey) are working on a letter that would express bi-partisan support for the SFQ bill components. If their bosses agree to release the letter, we will work with the Congressional staff to get as many Republican and Democratic signatories on it as possible, although time is tight. The goal is to get the letter out quickly so that it may potentially influence the SGR Senate Finance reform mark, to be released on December 10<sup>th</sup>. We are also exploring a sign-on letter from SFQ.

As was the case in 2012, the expected vehicle for the SFQ/Klobuchar quality legislation is SGR, either a comprehensive reform bill or an annual update. The SFC has announced that its mark will address funding for SGR extenders of which NQF is now one. It will also address the role of NQF with respect to approving and recommending measures for a reformed physician payment program and measure development.

If comprehensive SGR reform fails and instead there is a one to-two year update, it is likely that funding of the SFQ/Klobuchar bill will be short-term and not over a five-year period.

## **NEXT STEPS**

To recap, NQF will continue to work in concert with the SFQ and its leadership to try and influence the development of the SFC and W&M physician payment reform bills so that both NQF's existing role in statute is maintained and the quality measurement enterprise is supported over the long-term. At this point, our efforts to influence those deliberations include a bi-partisan letter from Senators to the Chairs/Ranking Members of the SFC and W&M; a bi-partisan bill; and a potential SFQ sign-on letter. If the document that Senate Finance releases fails to hit the mark, we will be at the ready to respond.