**PHIT Act Moves Forward Minus Golf...For Now**

The House Ways and Means Committee on Health have been deliberating and marking up a number of health care-related tax bills intended to expand health-care coverage and lower premiums. One major portion of their activity centered around expansion of Health Savings Accounts (HSA).

Included in HSA reform are many bills that would expand access and use of these accounts. One of these bills was the PHIT Act (Personal Health Investment Today - H.R. 6312). The golf industry has been promoting passage of a PHIT bill for a number of years. PHIT has been a key issue advocated during our annual WE ARE GOLF National Golf Day. With the broad bipartisan support garnered over the last few years, we felt passage would only require committee hearings.

Careful what you ask for! While a number of versions of the PHIT Act have been filed over the last few years, every version of the act included golf as an approved sport and fitness activity, making the purchase of green fees, lessons, equipment and supplies eligible for HSA expenditure. Prior to H.R. 6312 being filed and presented to the committee for consideration, a last minute change was made to the bill by committee staff that specifically excluded golf, horseback riding, hunting and sailing from the approved definition of “physical activity.”

Upon receiving this news, WE ARE GOLF members, along with our lobby firm Forbes-Tate, sprang into action. The strategy was to create a grassroot effort targeting House Ways and Means Committee members in the communities they represent. NGCOA reached out to owners and operators in the nine districts represented by committee members. Over 20 NGCOA member golf courses engaged with their local congressman’s office. According to George Cooper from Forbes-Tate Partners, “This effort sent a very clear demonstration of how closely golf interest are tracking PHIT and other legislation under consideration in Washington. They also received a very sharp taste of how vocal and engaged we will be even on a short notice.”

Unfortunately on Thursday, July 12, the committee passed PHIT by a vote of 28-7 without including golf back in the bill. According to Cooper, “Many of those ‘yes’ votes were cast based on a commitment to make changes before the bill goes to the floor - including our golf issue.”

According to Cooper, “the bill’s chief sponsor, Congressman Jason Smith (R-MO), said that rather than pushing for an amendment at this time, he’d instead agree to a commitment from committee leadership outside of the hearing that the golf fix will be made, or this bill will not be included in the HSA reform package”. Whether or not this will happen is anyone’s guess.

Over in the Senate, PHIT Act (S. 482) has not been scheduled for hearings by the Finance Committee. NGCOA will continue to closely follow this legislation and, if needed, will again call on our members to make more calls and send emails reminding their representatives the important role golf plays in creating and sustaining healthy communities!