

Press Release

Top of Form

Bicameral Repeal CLASS Group Calls on HHS Secretary Sebelius to Clarify Plans and Details on Program Implementation

September 22, 2011

Washington, D.C.—The bicameral Repeal CLASS Working Group today sent a [letter](#) to Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius seeking clarification about HHS' plans to implement the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) program and push for more information on critical decisions made by HHS prior to CLASS becoming law.

CLASS was established as part of President Obama' s health care act and creates a national, voluntary program to provide insurance coverage to purchase community living services for Americans who become disabled and require long-term care. Breaking news reports have indicated CLASS' head actuary has said HHS will close the CLASS office. HHS has thus far rejected claims that the program as a whole is being shuttered.

The lawmakers wrote, “ The Repeal CLASS Working Group released a report last week revealing that officials within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) warned that the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) long-term care entitlement program would be unsustainable, but that officials at HHS may have ignored those warnings. Today we received information that the HHS Administration on Aging is effectively closing the CLASS office, and that all the office' s employees have been reassigned or asked to leave.”

These developments raise important questions about the future of the CLASS program as well as whether the public has been fully informed about the administration' s views on this costly program.

In addition, the bicameral group requested answers on a number of questions regarding the process for making decisions about CLASS implementation and financing, including:

- How many people have been reassigned or asked to leave the CLASS office? Who will be working on the CLASS program going forward?
- Why did Secretary Sebelius support the inclusion of the CLASS program into the PPACA in a July 2009 letter to Senator Kennedy when HHS knew at that time that it was unsound and presented a substantial risk of a future bailout?
- Why did the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation say that “ we’ re entirely persuaded that reasonable premiums, solid participation rates, and financial solvency over the 75-year period can be maintained” at the same time an employee in his office was writing that CLASS “ [s]eems like a recipe for disaster.”
- Were any concerns about the CLASS program’ s sustainability communicated to Secretary Sebelius by HHS staff in the year before the health law passed? What were Secretary Sebelius’ actions upon hearing these concerns? If Secretary Sebelius was not informed of these concerns, what actions did Secretary Sebelius take to remedy this significant communication failure at HHS?

The letter’ s authors include: Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI), Senator John Thune (R-SD), Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-MT), Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-FL), Rep. Charles Boustany (R-LA), Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Rep. Joe Pitts (R-PA), Rep. Phil Gingrey, M.D. (R-GA), Rep. Michael C. Burgess, M.D. (R-TX), and Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-SC).

###