As we move toward the end of the 108th Congress, several members of Congress are focusing on obesity issues. This recent activity is in addition to legislation and programs designed to address obesity, such as the school nutrition program reauthorization; grant programs through the IMPACT Act; Safe Routes to School language in the transportation reauthorization legislation; and funding for obesity prevention through chronic disease prevention and control programs under CDC.

This week, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) introduced the HeLP America Act to Reduce Health Care Costs by Promoting Healthier Lifestyles, Emphasizing Prevention (HeLP Act), S.2558. The legislation addresses school wellness programs, community health, consumer awareness, tobacco marketing and regulation, and reimbursement for preventive services. At a briefing held with Sen. Harkin last week, the association noted the legislation works well with the recommendations contained in the ACS ADA AHA Everyday Choices for A Health Life partnership.

Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) introduced a second bill, the Childhood Obesity Act, that according to Senator Frist, "combats the fast-growing problem of childhood obesity." The bill would authorize funds for the creation of the Congressional Council to Combat Childhood Obesity. The council would highlight successful programs, develop model exercise and nutrition plans for schools, and coordinate public education efforts. After spending two years identifying model programs, the council would create a public-private foundation to award grants to schools to adopt anti-obesity programs.