

Big health care fight means big lobbying bucks

AARP spent \$5.3 million from April 1 through June 30

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CQPOLITICS

updated 8:18 a.m. PT, Tues., July 21, 2009

WASHINGTON - As the health care debate intensifies, the nation's leading advocacy group for older Americans is ramping up its efforts to influence what goes into the legislation, and spending more to lobby Congress.

"There is no doubt that health care has been the big thing for us this year," said Jim Dau, a spokesman for AARP. The organization has focused its efforts not just on the debate in Washington but also on lawmakers' districts around the country, he said.

AARP spent \$5.3 million from April 1 through June 30, an increase of \$1.2 million over its first-quarter spending of \$4 million, according to a CQ MoneyLine analysis of second-quarter lobbying disclosure reports filed Monday with the Senate Office of Public Records.

The filings illustrate how many groups — including senior advocacy groups and industry and labor organizations — are spending more to influence Congress as it barrels toward a decision on overhauling health care.

AARP, a highly visible participant in the contentious debate, has backed a plan by the drug companies to reduce prescription costs by \$80 billion over the next decade. The group also has praised the \$1 trillion plan developed by three House committees that would provide near-universal health insurance.

However, Dau said the organization has not taken an official position on any government-run insurance plan, a major point of criticism of some Republicans.

With 40 million members and a lobbying team of more than 50 people, AARP is a significant player in Washington.

Second-quarter lobbying reports were due at midnight, and as of early Monday evening, a number of companies and organizations had not filed their reports. But of those that had filed, many — though not all — showed an uptick in spending.

For example, [the Business Roundtable](#), an association of chief executives of large companies, reported second-quarter lobbying expenses of \$6.1 million, a \$4.9 million increase from the first quarter. As with that of most companies and organizations, that group is interested in influencing the health care bills, and more; its disclosure forms include interest in legislation on taxes, energy, trade, labor and appropriations.

[Wal-Mart Stores Inc.](#), a discount chain that has also been active in the health care debate, increased its spending on lobbying to \$2.58 million in the second quarter from \$1.52 million in the first quarter. Wal-Mart recently broke with many other businesses by endorsing a measure that would require employers to contribute to the cost of employees' health insurance.

Although it adamantly opposes the Democratic health care bills now being considered in House and Senate committees, the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** scaled back its lobbying expenditures — from **\$9.9 million** in the first quarter to **\$7.4 million** in the second quarter.

Some other organizations with an interest in health care also reported reduced lobbying spending from the first quarter to the second quarter. In that category were **America's Health Insurance Plans**, from **\$2 million** to **\$1.8 million**; and the **American Medical Association**, from **\$4.24 million** to **\$3.98 million**. The AMA recently endorsed the House health care plan.

The pharmaceutical company **GlaxoSmithKline** spent **\$2.2 million** in the second quarter, up from **\$1.78 million**. Another drugmaker, **Eli Lilly**, spent **\$3.5 million** on second-quarter lobbying, a jump of **\$150,000**. **Johnson & Johnson** spent **\$1.55 million** in the second quarter, compared with **\$1.53 million** in the first quarter. **Merck & Co.** spent **\$1.53 million** from April through June, compared with **\$1.5 million** during the first three months.

Bristol-Myers Squibb, however, spent slightly less, dropping from **\$814,617** in the first quarter to **\$809,000** in the second quarter.

The **American Beverage Association**, which has been fighting proposals to tax sodas to pay for health care, spent **\$1.2 million** on lobbying in the second quarter, up from **\$140,000** in the first quarter.

The **National Association of Children's Hospitals** increased its lobbying tab to **\$640,000** from **\$530,000**. The **American College of Radiology Association** spent **\$1.1 million** on lobbying in the second quarter, a slight increase from **\$923,080**.

But the **American Dental Association** spent **\$680,000** in the second quarter, a decrease from **\$830,000**, and the **American Academy of Family Physicians** spent **\$670,670** in the second quarter, compared with **\$779,764** in the first three months of the year.