



Health Policy Briefing

November 3, 2025

Government Shutdown Update

Congress did not make progress toward reopening the government last week. Senate Democrats have so far rejected the stopgap spending bill, which would extend government funding through November 21, 13 times. Democrats refuse to support any spending measure that does not extend the Affordable Care Act (ACA) advanced premium tax credits that are set to expire on December 31, while Republican leadership insists that the government be reopened before lawmakers debate an extension of the subsidies.

November 1 marked the depletion of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funds and the beginning of the ACA Marketplace open enrollment period. Late last week, a federal judge sent a written order to the administration requiring the Department of Agriculture to make SNAP payments no later than end of day Monday, or alternatively, partial payments by the end of the day Wednesday. Kaiser Family Foundation has estimated that the average increase in premiums for ACA benchmark silver plans will be 26% next year, while the amount that individuals pay for coverage will increase by 114% on average because of the expiration of enhanced premium subsidies.

As the shutdown continues, House Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-La.) is soliciting ideas from GOP leadership of the House Ways and Means, Education and Workforce, and Energy and Commerce committees about which policies could be incorporated into a year-end health care package. The group is reportedly discussing options to lower health insurance premiums, like the funding of cost-sharing reduction payments, along with possible reforms to the pharmacy benefit manager industry.

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Surgeon General Confirmation Hearing Postponed, HHS IG Nominee Appears Before Finance

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee postponed its confirmation hearing with Casey Means, nominee for U.S. Surgeon General, after the nominee went into labor. Means, who had planned to appear virtually, was more than 40 weeks pregnant at the time of her scheduled appearance before the panel on Thursday. Means is a medical doctor, wellness influencer, and co-founder of the bio wearables and health-tracking company Levels. Means graduated medical school but dropped out of her surgical residency in her fifth year, opting to open a functional medicine practice. Means was tapped for the position of surgeon general in May after the White House withdrew the nomination of former Fox News contributor Janette Nesheiwat.

The Senate Finance Committee held a confirmation hearing for Thomas Bell on Wednesday. Bell, who most recently worked as general counsel for Republicans in the House of Representatives, has been nominated to serve as inspector general of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Ahead of the hearing, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) sent a [letter](#) to the nominee questioning Bell's ability to perform the responsibilities of inspector general and "root out waste, fraud, and abuse in a manner that does not favor any ideological or political agenda." Senate Democrats have more broadly characterized the President's removal of the prior HHS inspector general as unlawful, raising foundational concerns with Bell's nomination process.

Sen. Marshall Requests Emergency DEA Action on 7-OH

Sen. Roger Marshall, MD (R-Kan.) has sent a [letter](#) to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) requesting emergency action to schedule 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) and related products as a Schedule I substance. Sen. Marshall expresses concerns that such products are being falsely marketed as kratom extracts and pose significant dangers to consumers. The letter asserts that 7-OH is approximately 13 times more potent than morphine, and that the current regulatory gap "blurs the distinction between a natural botanical product and a dangerous synthetic drug." The DEA had previously indicated plans to pursue rulemaking related to 7-OH. Marshall urges the agency to fast-track controlled substance scheduling and strengthen its oversight to prevent new synthetic derivatives from reaching the market.

USPSTF Meeting Postponed Again

HHS has postponed the November meeting of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). "The Trump Administration is committed to reopening the government so meetings like this one can occur," an HHS spokesperson said in a statement. Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. had previously cancelled USPSTF's July meeting.

Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing "Renewing Our Commitment: How the Older Americans Act Uplifts Families Living with Aging-Related Diseases;" 3:30 p.m.; November 5

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing "Assessing the Damage Done by Obamacare;" 2:00 p.m.; November 6

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Recently Introduced Health Legislation

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H.Res.830 — Providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 999) to protect an individual's ability to access contraceptives and to engage in contraception and to protect a health care providers ability to provide contraceptives, contraception, and information related to contraception; Sponsor: Fletcher, Lizzie [Rep.-D-TX-7]; Committees: House - Rules

H.Res.831 — Expressing support for the designation of October 2025 as "National Down Syndrome Awareness Month"; Sponsor: Garbarino, Andrew R. [Rep.-R-NY-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.5813 — To amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require group health plans and group health plans and health insurance issuers offering group or individual health insurance coverage to provide coverage of certain items and services relating to breast or chest wall reconstruction furnished in connection with breast cancer treatment; Sponsor: Cammack, Kat [Rep.-R-FL-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Education and Workforce

H.R.5821 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the treatment of certain hospitals as critical access hospitals under the Medicare program; Sponsor: LaMalfa, Doug [Rep.-R-CA-1]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

H.R.5828 — To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to carry out a public awareness campaign to increase awareness of the importance of father inclusion and engagement in improving overall health outcomes during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Vindman, Eugene Simon [Rep.-D-VA-7]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

S.3064 — A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure appropriate access to non-opioid pain management drugs for chronic pain conditions under part D of the Medicare program; Sponsor: Daines, Steve [Sen.-R-MT]; Committees: Senate - Finance

H.Res.835 — Declaring gun violence a public health crisis; Sponsor: Espaillat, Adriano [Rep.-D-NY-13]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.5839 — To amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to include certain supplemental coverage provided to individual health insurance coverage as an excepted benefit; Sponsor: Balderson, Troy [Rep.-R-OH-12]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.5844 — To amend the Controlled Substances Act with respect to the registration of opioid treatment programs to increase stakeholder input from relevant communities and to ensure such programs are treating patients in need, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Espaillat, Adriano [Rep.-D-NY-13]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Judiciary

H.R.5858 — To make it easier for rural health facilities to buy and upgrade preventative health care equipment through the Community Facilities Grant Program of the Department of Agriculture; Sponsor: Scholten, Hillary J. [Rep.-D-MI-3]; Committees: House - Agriculture

H.R.5859 — To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award grants for the purpose of establishing, operating, or expanding one-stop crisis facilities, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Smith, Adam [Rep.-D-WA-9]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Financial Services; Judiciary

H.R.5861 — To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to seek an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to conduct a study on establishing a system for storing last wish documents, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Suozzi, Thomas R. [Rep.-D-NY-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.5864 — To establish standards for trauma kits purchased using funds provided under the Edward Byrne Memorial

Justice Assistance Grant Program; Sponsor: Van Drew, Jefferson [Rep.-R-NJ-2]; Committees: House – Judiciary

H.R.5865 — To establish the Thalidomide Survivors Compensation Program, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Van Drew, Jefferson [Rep.-R-NJ-2]; Committees: House - Judiciary; Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce; Natural Resources; Agriculture; Education and Workforce; Financial Services; Transportation and Infrastructure; Veterans' Affairs

S.Res.476 — A resolution supporting the designation of October 2025 as “Substance Use & Misuse Prevention Month” to raise awareness of substance use and misuse in the United States; Sponsor: Ricketts, Pete [Sen.-R-NE]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.Res.477 — A resolution designating the first full week in May as “Tardive Dyskinesia Awareness Week”; Sponsor: Mullin, Markwayne [Sen.-R-OK]; Committees: Senate – Judiciary

S.Res.480 — A resolution expressing support for the recognition of October 2025 as “World Menopause Awareness Month,” and expressing the sense of the Senate regarding global awareness and access to care during the menopausal transition and post-menopause; Sponsor: Booker, Cory A. [Sen.-D-NJ]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.3076 — A bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to permanently schedule the class of 2-benzylbenzimidazole-opioids known as nitazenes, and for other purposes; Sponsor: McCormick, David [Sen.-R-PA]; Committees: Senate – Judiciary

S.3081 — A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to provide for reciprocal marketing approval of certain drugs, biological products, and devices that are authorized to be lawfully marketed abroad, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Cruz, Ted [Sen.-R-TX]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.3087 — A bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to prohibit certain acts related to fentanyl, analogues of fentanyl, and counterfeit substances, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Grassley, Chuck [Sen.-R-IA]; Committees: Senate – Judiciary