



Health Policy Briefing

November 17, 2025

Government Reopens Following Record Shutdown

President Donald Trump signed government funding legislation (H.R. 5371) on Wednesday, ending the nation's longest ever shutdown that had commenced 43 days prior. The deal negotiated by Senate GOP leadership and several Senate Democrats included an appropriations minibus – funding Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Rural Development, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Legislative Branch for the entirety of fiscal year (FY) 2026 – as well as a separate stopgap funding the remainder of the federal government through January 30, 2026. The package also provides funding for expired health extenders – including telehealth waivers, the Acute Hospital Care at Home program, and the work Geographic Price Cost Index floor of 1.0 – through January 30. In exchange for Democratic support, Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.) has pledged to hold a vote on an Affordable Care Act (ACA) enhanced premium tax credit extension no later than the second week of December. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) has refused to commit to such a vote.

The FDA appropriations portion of the package would fund the agency at approximately \$7 billion –including \$3.4 billion in discretionary funding – similar but not identical to the funding measure unanimously advanced by the Senate Appropriations Committee in July. It includes a five-year reauthorization of the Over-the-Counter Monograph Drug User Fee program. The agreement requires the agency to report on its progress toward the use of alternatives to animal testing for the clearance of new sunscreens and topical over-the-counter drugs. The bill also includes enhanced enforcement provisions against illegal tobacco products. Majority Leader Thune has stated that the chamber will move quickly to begin passage of additional FY 2026 spending measures this week, including funding for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Discussions are underway amongst the White House and congressional Republicans about how to address the spike in health care premiums that will result from the expiration of the enhanced ACA tax credits on December 31. The President has expressed support for paying Americans directly for their health care expenses, shifting from the current tax credit system to one of cash payments to individuals. The idea has been praised by a number of Republicans on Capitol Hill, several of whom have indicated plans to draft

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legislation in line with the proposal. House committee chairs are scheduled to hold listening sessions with Republican members about the party's health care policy agenda and the expiring tax credits this week. On Wednesday, the Senate Finance Committee is holding a hearing to consider solutions to address the rising cost of health care.

Sen. Welch Leads Letter on New Drug Pricing Arrangements, TrumpRx

A group of seven Senate Democrats have [written](#) to HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. requesting information about the recently announced drug pricing arrangements the administration has entered into with Pfizer and AstraZeneca. The letter, led by Sen. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), expresses concern that the introduction of preferential pricing arrangements with individual manufacturers could undermine the Medicaid Drug Rebate Program. The lawmakers also pose questions about the scope, structure, and legal authority for the new TrumpRx direct-to-patient prescription drug sales platform.

Democrats Raise Concerns with Mifepristone Review

The Senate Democratic caucus has sent a [letter](#) to HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Commissioner of Food and Drugs Marty Makary, MD in response to the administration's announcement that they will open an investigation into the safety and efficacy of mifepristone. "We are alarmed by the department's obvious attempts to politicize the review, regulation, and approval of mifepristone at the Food and Drug Administration, and we write to request more information on the details of the review of mifepristone," the letter states. The lawmakers go on to express concerns about the administration's "clear intent to tee up further restrictions on medication abortion, in light of a recent federal court order holding that the agency has failed to justify its current extreme restrictions on mifepristone and must consider lifting them." They request a response to a series of related questions by November 28.

Fetterman Hospitalized Following Fall

Sen. John Fetterman (D-Pa.) was hospitalized last week after sustaining minor injuries from a fall. According to a social media post from his office, Sen. Fetterman fell after feeling light-headed on a walk near his home on Thursday morning. Doctors determined that the incident was caused by a "ventricular fibrillation flare-up." The Senator is doing well, but chose to remain at the hospital for observation and for physicians to "fine-tune his medication regimen."

Arrington, Watson Coleman Announce Retirement from House

House Budget Committee Chairman Jodey Arrington (R-Texas) announced that he will not seek reelection in 2026. Rep. Arrington was first elected to the House of Representatives in 2016. In addition to leading the Budget Committee, he also sits on the Ways and Means Committee. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-N.J.) also announced her decision to not run for reelection next year. Rep. Watson Coleman has served in the House since 2015. She was the first African American woman to represent New Jersey in the House of Representatives, and currently serves on the House Appropriations Committee.

Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

House Budget Committee hearing “Oversight of the Congressional Budget Office;” 10:15 a.m.; November 18

House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing “Innovation with Integrity: Examining the Risks and Benefits of AI Chatbots;” 2:00 p.m.; November 18

Senate Finance Committee open executive session to consider favorably reporting the nomination of Thomas Bell, of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services; 9:45 a.m.; November 19

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing “Examining the Future of the U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network;” 10:00 a.m.; November 19

Senate Finance Committee hearing “The Rising Cost of Health Care: Considering Meaningful Solutions for all Americans;” 10:00 a.m.; November 19

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee nomination hearing for Thomas Bell to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 10:00 a.m.; November 19

House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health Hearing on Modernizing Care Coordination to Prevent and Treat Chronic Disease; 2:00 p.m.; November 19

Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing “Made in America: Restoring Trust in Our Medicines;” 3:45 p.m.; November 19

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee business meeting to consider the nomination of Thomas Bell to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 10:00 a.m.; November 20

House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs hearing “Improving Outcomes for Disabled Veterans: Oversight of VA’s Medical Disability Examination Office;” 12:00 p.m.; November 20

Recently Introduced Health Legislation

S.3159 — A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to temporarily provide for long-term care pharmacy supply fees in connection with the dispensing of certain drugs; Sponsor: Lankford, James [Sen.-R-OK]; Committees: Senate - Finance

S.3166 — A bill to rescind unused COVID funding and reduce the deficit; Sponsor: Ernst, Joni [Sen.-R-IA]; Latest Action: Introduced in the Senate. Read the first time. Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under Read the First Time.

H.R.5940 — To prohibit implementation of the WISer model under the Medicare program; Sponsor: DelBene, Suzan K. [Rep.-D-WA-1]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.5943 — To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a Task Force on Complementary and Integrative Health/Whole Health, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Elfleth, Sarah [Rep.-D-MD-3]; Committees: House - Veterans’ Affairs

H.R.5944 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to allow for Federal financial participation for services furnished to patients in an institution for mental diseases under the Medicaid program; Sponsor: Finstad, Brad [Rep.-R-MN-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.5946 — To provide for the issuance of a Veterans Medical Debt Relief Stamp; Sponsor: Flood, Mike [Rep.-R-NE-1]; Committees: House - Oversight and Government Reform; Veterans' Affairs

H.R.5949 — To establish a pilot program to furnish dental care to veterans who reside in rural and highly rural areas; Sponsor: Gonzales, Tony [Rep.-R-TX-23]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.5969 — To amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to ensure that abortion-inducing drugs bear a label identifying the name and address of the dispenser and the name of the prescriber, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Moore, Barry [Rep.-R-AL-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.5972 — To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to extend the annual open enrollment period for enrolling in a qualified health plan offered by an Exchange for plan year 2026; Sponsor: Pappas, Chris [Rep.-D-NH-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.5981 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to waive the requirement of certain veterans to make copayments for hospital care and medical services in the case of an error by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Smucker, Lloyd [Rep.-R-PA-11]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.5986 — To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to destroy adulterated, misbranded, or counterfeit tobacco products offered for import; Sponsor: Van Duyne, Beth [Rep.-R-TX-24]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

S.Res.492 — A resolution recognizing community care as an essential tool for meeting the health care needs of the veterans of the United States; Sponsor: Blackburn, Marsha [Sen.-R-TN]; Committees: Senate - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.6016 — To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend and modify the enhanced premium tax credit, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Schneider, Bradley Scott [Rep.-D-IL-10]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

H.R.6010 — To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend and modify the enhanced premium tax credit, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Liccardo, Sam T. [Rep.-D-CA-16]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.6009 — Defense Biotechnology Strategy Act; Sponsor: Houlihan, Chrissy [Rep.-D-PA-6]; Committees: House - Armed Services; Foreign Affairs

H.R.6005 — To amend the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 to direct the Interagency Working Group on Toxic Exposure to conduct research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of descendants of individuals exposed to toxic substances while serving as members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Dingell, Debbie [Rep.-D-MI-6]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.6001 — To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit a report on risk reduction strategies to lower the incidence and prevalence of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis in veterans; Sponsor: Crow, Jason [Rep.-D-CO-6]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.6000 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the collection and analysis of data regarding certain suicides by veterans, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Crow, Jason [Rep.-D-CO-6]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.5999 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish an opioid antagonist to a veteran without requiring a prescription or copayment; Sponsor: Conaway, Herbert C. [Rep.-D-NJ-3]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.5996 — To direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct reviews of certain budget requests of the President for the medical care accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Sponsor: Brownley, Julia [Rep.-D-CA-26]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.Res.872 — Supporting the goals and ideals of “Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) Awareness Day”; Sponsor: Valadao, David G. [Rep.-R-CA-22]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.6022 — To amend title 36, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a flag for next of kin of veterans who die by suicide; Sponsor: Bresnahan, Robert P. [Rep.-R-PA-8]; Committees: House – Judiciary

H.R.6024 — To improve mental health services of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Crow, Jason [Rep.-D-CO-6]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs; Armed Services

H.R.6030 — To include Puerto Rico in National Survey on Drug Use and Health, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Hernández, Pablo Jose [Resident Commissioner-D-PR-At Large]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.6031 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish a floor in Medicare Advantage benchmark rates for regions with low Medicare fee-for-service penetration; Sponsor: Hernández, Pablo Jose [Resident Commissioner-D-PR-At Large]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.6038 — To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish an integrated project team to improve the process for scheduling appointments for health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Mackenzie, Ryan [Rep.-R-PA-7]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.6043 — MY DATA Act of 2025; Sponsor: Trahan, Lori [Rep.-D-MA-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce