



## Health Policy Briefing

January 12, 2026

### FY 2026 Appropriations Update

The House of Representatives passed a [minibus appropriations package](#) last week containing fiscal year (FY) 2026 Interior-Enviornment, Commerce-Justice-Science, and Energy-Water funding bills. The legislation would reduce funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) by 3.4%, far less than the 55% cut proposed by the President's budget. The bill also includes language blocking the imposition of a 15% cap on indirect cost reimbursement for the federal science research agencies funded by the minibus, including NSF, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, NASA, and the Office of Science at the Department of Energy. The Senate intends to bring the package to the floor early this week.

House appropriators worked through the weekend to finalize the next government funding package covering State-Foreign Operations, Homeland Security, and Financial Services. The Labor-Health and Human Services (LHHS) spending bill is expected to be among the final appropriations measures to move and be packaged with funding for Defense and Transportation-Housing and Urban Development. LHHS Subcommittee Chair Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.) has said that several unresolved issues related to his panel's spending bill remain. Lawmakers face a January 30 deadline to address health extenders, avert another government shutdown, and fund most federal agencies for fiscal year 2026.

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## House Passes APTC Extension, Bipartisan Senate Negotiations Ongoing

The House of Representatives voted last week to extend the enhanced Affordable Care Act (ACA) advanced premium tax credits (APTC) for another three years. Seventeen Republicans joined Democrats in support of a clean extension of the enhanced tax credits, which expired at the end of 2025. Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that out-of-pocket ACA premiums have more than doubled on average with the expiration of the subsidies. The Congressional Budget Office has projected that a three-year extension of the subsidies would cost \$80.6 billion over the next decade.

While the Senate did not have enough support to pass the same provision in December, the House-passed bill could serve as a vehicle for compromise legislation to address rising health insurance premiums. Bipartisan talks led by Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Bernie Moreno (R-Ohio) alongside roughly a dozen other senators are taking place. The negotiators are considering several APTC policy modifications, including a shorter, two-year extension, an across-the-board minimum \$5 premium, a 700% federal poverty level income cap on eligibility, the extension of open enrollment until March 1, and funding for cost-sharing reduction payments. Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.) has suggested that any bipartisan deal must also include a bridge to the expansion of tax-advantaged health savings accounts, income limits, and abortion restrictions. Reports indicate that the negotiators are close to reaching a deal and that legislative text could be released as early as this week. Americans currently have until January 15 to enroll in marketplace health plans for the remainder of 2026.

## Sara Carter Confirmed as Drug Czar

The Senate confirmed Sara Carter to lead the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) in a 52-48 vote on Tuesday. Carter is a podcast host and former Fox News contributor who has reported on drug trafficking and cartels. While she focused on the issue of the illicit drug supply during her confirmation process, in her role as ONDCP director Carter will also be responsible for overseeing federal policy and funding related to substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery.

## State of the Union Address to Take Place Feb. 24

President Donald Trump will deliver his first State of the Union address of his second term on February 24. The President's speech to lawmakers last March was considered a joint address to Congress. This year's State of the Union will provide President Trump the opportunity to discuss his legislative priorities for the coming year.

## Schrier Leads Letter on Childhood Immunization Schedule

Rep. Kim Schrier, MD (D-Wash.) has led a [letter](#) signed by 115 other lawmakers urging U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to restore the U.S. childhood immunization schedule. The letter follows a recent announcement that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is reducing the number of vaccines routinely recommended for all children from 17 to 11. "Your agency's decision to overhaul decades of evidence-based science is arbitrary and driven by ideology. This announcement completely bypasses the recommendations made by the previously esteemed Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a panel that you have replaced with your own hand-picked members, most of whom have long track records of anti-vaccine activism," the lawmakers argue. "We demand that you reinstate the previous childhood immunization schedule, restore sanctity to the ACIP, and protect the health and wellbeing of children," the letter concludes.

## California Congressman LaMalfa Dies at 65

Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R-Calif.), 65, passed away at the age of 65 on January 6 during emergency surgery. Rep. LaMalfa, a former state legislator, was serving his seventh term in Congress at the time of his passing. He was a member of the Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Transportation and Infrastructure committees. LaMalfa's sudden death further lessens the GOP's majority in the House of Representatives. With the resignation of Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.), which took effect January 6, Republicans now hold just 218 seats in the chamber, affording the party only two defections on any party-line vote with all members present.

## Hoyer Announces Retirement from Congress

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), 86, has announced his plans to retire from Congress after more than four decades in the House of Representatives. Rep. Hoyer was first elected to Congress in 1981. He served as House Majority Leader from 2007 to 2011 and again from 2019 until 2023. Since stepping down from his leadership post in 2022, Hoyer has served as a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee.

## Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health legislative hearing including discussion draft of the Data Driven Suicide Prevention Act and H.R. 6001, the Veterans with ALS Reporting Act; 2:15 p.m.; January 13

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee hearing "Protecting Women: Exposing the Dangers of Chemical Abortion Drugs;" 10:00 a.m.; January 14

House Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Research and Technology hearing "Advancing America's AI Action Plan;" 10:00 a.m.; January 14

House Committee on Education and Workforce hearing "Building an AI-Ready America;" 10:15 a.m.; January 14

Senate HELP Committee executive session to consider S. 1157 - Women and Lung Cancer Research and Preventive Services Act; S. 921 - Tyler's Law; S. 2169 - Rural Hospital Cybersecurity Enhancement Act; and S. 272 - Protect Infant Formula from Contamination Act; 10:00 a.m.; January 15

House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health and House Committee on Ways and Means hearings with health insurance companies; time TBD; January 22

## Recently Introduced Health Legislation

H.R.6937 — To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the H-1B program, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Greene, Marjorie Taylor [Rep.-R-GA-14]; Committees: House - Judiciary; Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.6938 — Making consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Cole, Tom [Rep.-R-OK-4]; Committees: House - Appropriations; Budget

H.R.6940 — To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to assess how Executive departments address mental health crisis prevention and awareness, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Biggs, Sheri [Rep.-R-SC-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.6941 — To direct the Secretary of Energy to conduct a study to identify the effects of covered geoengineering projects on the health of humans and the environment, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Crane, Elijah [Rep.-R-AZ-2]; Committees:

## House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.6945 — To amend part A of title IV of the Social Security Act to clarify the authority of States to use funds for pregnancy centers, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Fischbach, Michelle [Rep.-R-MN-7]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

H.R.6951 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to repeal the requirement that States establish a Medicaid Estate Recovery Program and to limit the circumstances in which a State may place a lien on a Medicaid beneficiary's property; Sponsor: Schakowsky, Janice D. [Rep.-D-IL-9]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

S.3588 — A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide funding for trained school personnel to administer drugs and devices for emergency treatment of known or suspected opioid overdose, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Merkley, Jeff [Sen.-D-OR]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.3593 — A bill to increase the penalties for health care fraud, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Moody, Ashley [Sen.-R-FL]; Committees: Senate - Judiciary

H.R.6972 — To amend title X of the Public Health Service Act to require grant recipients to comply with all applicable State and local laws requiring notification or reporting of child abuse, child molestation, sexual abuse, rape, incest, intimate partner violence, or human trafficking, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Smucker, Lloyd [Rep.-R-PA-11]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

S.3607 — A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for expanded coverage of services furnished by genetic counselors under part B of the Medicare program, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Barrasso, John [Sen.-R-WY]; Committees: Senate - Finance

S.3604 — A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to carry out activities to establish, expand, and sustain a public health nursing workforce, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Markey, Edward J. [Sen.-D-MA]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.3599 — A bill to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to establish a public health insurance option, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Whitehouse, Sheldon [Sen.-D-RI]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.3598 — A bill to provide for the periodic issuance of up-to-date clinical guidance on addressing the health effects of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and for other purposes; Sponsor: Shaheen, Jeanne [Sen.-D-NH]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

H.R.6974 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security to permit additional accrediting organizations to approve specialized MA plans for special needs individuals; Sponsor: Arrington, Jodey C. [Rep.-R-TX-19]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.6977 — To provide for the periodic issuance of up-to-date clinical guidance on addressing the health effects of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and for other purposes; Sponsor: Dexter, Maxine [Rep.-D-OR-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.6989 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to carry out activities to establish, expand, and sustain a public health nursing workforce, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Stansbury, Melanie A. [Rep.-D-NM-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce