



Health Policy Briefing

September 21, 2026

House Passes Health Bills Before Recessing Until After Midterms

The House of Representatives passed several bills last week aimed at protecting communities from illicit drugs:

- The Combating Illicit Xylazine Act (H.R. 1266) would classify xylazine as a Schedule III drug.
- Tyler' Law (H.R. 2004) would require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to study and issue guidance on whether hospital emergency departments should implement fentanyl testing as a routine procedure for patients experiencing an overdose.
- The Stop Pills That Kill Act (H.R. 8005) would strengthen the Drug Enforcement Administration's ability to conduct regulatory oversight of pill press machines and their parts.

Other bills passed by the chamber last week include H.R. 2846, entitling officers of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps to the same leave benefits currently available to the rest of the uniformed services forces, and H.R. 10326, legislation to require states to release records related to safety-net and grant programs, including Medicaid, at the request of the attorney general. Such records could include ID verification, provider billing statements, benefit disbursement logs, and demographic information.

Finally, the Kay Hagan Tick Reauthorization Act (S. 2398) is being sent to the President for his signature after being unanimously passed by the House on Tuesday. The bill, which was approved by the Senate last month, would reauthorize through fiscal year 2030 the National Strategy and Regional Centers of Excellence in Vector-Borne Disease and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's cooperative agreements with health departments in areas at high risk of vector-borne diseases. The President is expected to sign the legislation into law.

House lawmakers have now departed Washington until after the midterms, while the Senate is currently scheduled to remain in session through October 2. Both chambers are then currently scheduled to reconvene on November 9.

Inside

HELP to Vote on Three Health Nominees This Week...	2
Ways and Means Marks Up Four Health Bills.....	2
Budget Committee Advances Health Scoring Legislation.....	2
Landsman, Onder Introduced MA Prior Authorization Bill.....	2
Former Sen. Jon Kyl Dies at 84.....	2
Secretary Kennedy Appoints New USPSTF Members.....	3
White House Drafting Executive Order on NIH Grants.....	3
Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups.....	3
Recently Introduced Health Legislation.....	4

HELP to Vote on Three Health Nominees This Week

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee will meet on Thursday to vote on the nominations of Nicole Saphier, MD to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service and Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, Timothy Westlake, MD to be Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, and Mary Lazare to be Assistant Secretary for Aging. The nominations are expected to be advanced for confirmation votes on the Senate floor. Following the nomination votes, the committee will hold a confirmation hearing for Heidi Overton, MD, PhD, the Trump administration's nominee for Commissioner of Food and Drugs.

Ways and Means Marks Up Four Health Bills

The House Ways and Means Committee held a markup of four health care related bills last week:

- The Alzheimer's Screening and Prevention Act (H.R. 6130), which would provide for Medicare coverage of blood tests for Alzheimer's, passed the committee in a 40-0 vote.
- The Medically Tailored Home-Delivered Meals Program Pilot Act (H.R. 5439), which would create a Medicare pilot program to deliver medically tailored food for patients, also passed the committee unanimously in a 39-0 vote.
- The Apples to Apples Comparison Act (H.R. 4093) was advanced in a 25-15 vote. The bill would require the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to publish detailed annual fee-for-service and Medicare Advantage plan expenditure data for each calendar year, allowing full comparison of the two programs. It also directs the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission to conduct retrospective analysis comparing federal expenditures for Medicare enrollees.
- The Empowering Moms Act (H.R. 10356) passed the committee in a 25-13 vote. The bill codifies Moms.gov as a central clearinghouse of resources for pregnant women with information about pregnancy resource centers, adoption agencies, and other public and private resources available near their zip code and surrounding areas.

Budget Committee Advances Health Scoring Legislation

The House Budget Committee unanimously voted to advance the Preventive Health Savings Act (H.R. 4464) on Wednesday. The bipartisan measure would establish a mechanism for the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to, upon a bipartisan request, assess budgetary savings from preventive health care legislation over a 30-year window. Under current rules, CBO primarily scores legislation within a 10-year budget window.

Landsman, Onder Introduced MA Prior Authorization Bill

Representatives Greg Landsman (D-Ohio) and Bob Onder, MD (R-Mo.) introduced the Protecting Approved Care Act (H.R. 10394) last week. The legislation aims to protect patients and providers from coverage decision reversals or changes after care is approved by insurers in the Medicare Advantage (MA) program. For a service that has been granted prior authorization, the bill would specifically prohibit plans from denying coverage based on lack of medical necessity, reopening the determination (except for good cause or fraud), and changing the billing code assigned to the claim to reduce payment, except under limited exceptions. For services that do not require prior authorization, the service must be treated as if prior authorization was granted and the same protections apply. The full bill text can be found [here](#).

Former Sen. Jon Kyl Dies at 84

Former U.S. Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona died last week at the age of 84 from complications of a neurological disorder. Kyl had announced in December 2025 that he had been diagnosed with dementia. The Republican lawmaker served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1987 to 1995 and in the Senate from 1995 to 2013, including holding party leadership positions as Republican Policy Committee chairman, Republican Policy chairman, and Senate Minority Whip, then briefly returned in 2018 to fill the seat left vacant by Sen. John McCain's death. Kyl is remembered as a pragmatic and hardworking legislator and for his policy expertise on arms control, immigration, and water rights.

Secretary Kennedy Appoints New USPSTF Members

HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. announced the addition of eight new members to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) last week, bringing the total number of USPSTF members to 16. The task force has not met since March 2025. The new members include:

- Seth J. Corey, MD, MPH, is a pediatric hematologist-oncologist in the Departments of Pediatrics and Heart, Blood, and Kidney Research at Cleveland Clinic and the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center and a professor of molecular medicine at Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine at Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Corey will serve as USPSTF chair.
- Patrick K. Hunter, MD, MSc, is a pediatrician at Pensacola Pediatrics, assistant clinical professor at Florida State University, and a member of the Florida State Board of Medicine.
- Ronald P. Karlsberg, MD, is a clinical professor of medicine at the Smidt Heart Institute at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, president and co-founder of the National Institute for Cardiovascular Research and Innovation, and managing partner of the Cardiovascular Medical Group of Southern California.
- Venkatesh L. Murthy, MD, PhD, is the Melvyn Rubenfire professor of preventive cardiology in the department of internal medicine at the University of Michigan.
- Stephen T. Parente, PhD, is the Minnesota Insurance Industry Chair of Health Finance, director of the Medical Industry MBA program, associate dean of the Carlson Global Institute, and professor in the department of finance at the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota.
- Goldie Stands-Over-Bull, MD, is the lead family medicine physician at Texas Native Health.
- Louis J. Wilson, MD, is an internist specializing in gastroenterology, hepatology, and clinical nutrition, managing partner of Wichita Falls Gastroenterology Associates, section chief for Gastroenterology in the Department of Medicine at United Regional Healthcare System, and medical director at Digestive Health Research of North Texas.
- Dennis W. Wulfek, MD, MBA, DHA, is a diagnostic radiologist and president of the practice board at RadPartners MBB Radiology.

White House Drafting Executive Order on NIH Grants

Several reports this weekend indicate that the White House is drafting an executive order to establish a new external committee with the power to veto National Institutes of Health (NIH) awards that do not align with the President's political agenda. The *Washington Post* and other publications report that a contentious meeting took place on Friday between Office of Management and Budget director Russ Vought, who supports the proposal, and NIH Director Jay Bhattacharya, MD, who has resisted it. Earlier this month, Congress temporarily blocked a proposed rule that would give OMB more authority over federal financial assistance, including NIH grants.

Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing "Leveling the Playing Field: Restoring America's Edge in Generic Drug Manufacturing;" 3:30 p.m.; September 23

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee executive session to vote on the nominations of Nicole Saphier to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service; Timothy Westlake to be Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, Department of Health and Human Services; and Mary Lazare to be Assistant Secretary for Aging, Department of Health and Human Services; 10:00 a.m.; September 24

Senate HELP Committee hearing on the nomination of Heidi Overton to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs; 10:30 a.m.; September 24

Hart Health Strategies Inc.

Recently Introduced Health Legislation

4

S.Res.850 — A resolution supporting the designation of the week of September 14 through September 18, 2026, as “Malnutrition Awareness Week”; Sponsor: Murphy, Christopher [Sen.-D-CT]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

H.Res.1534 — Expressing support for the designation of the week of September 13 to 19, 2026, as “National Co-Responder and Crisis Clinician Week”; Sponsor: Evans, Gabe [Rep.-R-CO-8]; Committees: House - Oversight and Government Reform

H.R.10356 — Empowering Moms Act; Sponsor: Fischbach, Michelle [Rep.-R-MN-7]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.10358 — To assist survivors of stroke and other debilitating health occurrences in returning to work; Sponsor: Beatty, Joyce [Rep.-D-OH-3]; Committees: House - Education and Workforce

H.R.10359 — To amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to permanently extend the authority of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award priority review vouchers for rare pediatric disease products; Sponsor: Bilirakis, Gus M. [Rep.-R-FL-12]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10369 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act, and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, to create certain requirements with respect to pharmacy benefit managers; Sponsor: Mackenzie, Ryan [Rep.-R-PA-7]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Education and Workforce

H.R.10370 — To better coordinate Federal efforts to utilize advance technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to improve diagnoses, treatments, cures, and prevention strategies for pediatric cancer, and for other purposes; Sponsor: McCaul, Michael T. [Rep.-R-TX-10]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10373 — Protecting Workers’ Wages from Medical Debt Act; Sponsor: Scott, Robert C. “Bobby” [Rep.-D-VA-3]; Committees: House - Education and Workforce

H.R.10374 — To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to continue the Part D Premium Stabilization Demonstration under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Sewell, Terri A. [Rep.-D-AL-7]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.10376 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish reporting and transparency requirements for data related to telehealth services under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Walkinshaw, James R. [Rep.-D-VA-11]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

S.Res.853 — A resolution recognizing suicide as a serious public health problem and expressing support for the designation of September 8, 2026, as “988 Day” and the role of 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline; Sponsor: Booker, Cory A. [Sen.-D-NJ]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

H.Res.1538 — Supporting the designation of the week of September 14 through September 18, 2026, as “Malnutrition Awareness Week”; Sponsor: Bonamici, Suzanne [Rep.-D-OR-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Agriculture; Education and Workforce; Ways and Means

H.R.10394 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish requirements with respect to the use of prior authorization and claims denial under Medicare Advantage plans; Sponsor: Landsman, Greg [Rep.-D-OH-1]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.10398 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to modify payment rates under the Federally qualified health

center prospective payment system under the Medicare program, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Rulli, Michael A. [Rep.-R-OH-6]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

S.Res.856 — A resolution supporting the designation of September 19, 2026, as “National Stillbirth Prevention and Awareness Day”, recognizing tens of thousands of families in the United States that have endured a stillbirth, and seizing the opportunity to keep other families from experiencing the same tragedy; Sponsor: Merkley, Jeff [Sen.-D-OR]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5406 — A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the limitation on waiver for pay of critical health care personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: King, Angus S., Jr. [Sen.-I-ME]; Committees: Senate - Veterans’ Affairs

S.5409 — A bill to restore and strengthen the obligation of the Environmental Protection Agency to protect human health and the environment, to halt unlawful deregulatory actions, to require enforcement of the Clean Air Act, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Whitehouse, Sheldon [Sen.-D-RI]; Committees: Senate - Environment and Public Works

S.5410 — A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish the Firefighter PFAS Injury Compensation Program, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Booker, Cory A. [Sen.-D-NJ]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.5415 – A bill to direct the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration to enter into appropriate arrangements with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to provide for a report on the health impacts of air traffic noise and pollution, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Warren, Elizabeth [Sen.-D-MA]; Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

S.5419 — A bill to establish certain procedures for physicians and other licensed health professionals, place certain requirements on medical practices and management services organizations, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Warren, Elizabeth [Sen.-D-MA]; Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

H.Res.1548 — Supporting the designation of September 19, 2026, as “National Stillbirth Prevention and Awareness Day”, recognizing tens of thousands of families in the United States that have endured a stillbirth, and seizing the opportunity to keep other families from experiencing the same tragedy; Sponsor: Hinson, Ashley [Rep.-R-IA-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Res.1555 — Supporting the designation of September 20, 2026, as “Pharmacy Workforce Suicide Awareness Day” to raise awareness of, and promote a national discussion about, pharmacy workforce suicide and to reduce the stigma of mental health conditions, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Tonko, Paul [Rep.-D-NY-20]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Con.Res.118 — Designating September 2026, as “Gynecologic Cancers Awareness Month”; Sponsor: Dingell, Debbie [Rep.-D-MI-6]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10405 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to ensure that pediatric cancer experts are represented in State comprehensive cancer control coalitions, to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a pediatric cancer advisory committee, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Gottheimer, Josh [Rep.-D-NJ-5]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10410 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish a national graduate nurse education program; Sponsor: Underwood, Lauren [Rep.-D-IL-14]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.10414 — To amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to increase access to community health workers under the Medicare and Medicaid programs; Sponsor: Adams, Alma S. [Rep.-D-NC-12]; Committees: House - Energy and

Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.10419 — To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program to improve access to and awareness of community-based dental services for veterans residing in rural areas, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Bergman, Jack [Rep.-R-MI-1]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.10425 — To restore and strengthen the obligation of the Environmental Protection Agency to protect human health and the environment, to halt unlawful deregulatory actions, to require enforcement of the Clean Air Act, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Casten, Sean [Rep.-D-IL-6]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Natural Resources; Agriculture; Transportation and Infrastructure

H.R.10440 — To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to establish a refundable tax credit for health care providers in rural areas; Sponsor: Harrigan, Pat [Rep.-R-NC-10]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

H.R.10444 — To establish certain protections for physicians and other licensed health professionals, place certain requirements on medical practices and management services organizations, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Hoyle, Val T. [Rep.-D-OR-4]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.10462 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to establish the Firefighter PFAS Injury Compensation Program, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Soto, Darren [Rep.-D-FL-9]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce; Budget

H.R.10476 — To require coverage of annual glaucoma screenings for certain individuals, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Wilson, Frederica S. [Rep.-D-FL-24]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Oversight and Government Reform

S.Res.866 — A resolution supporting the designation of October 2026 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.5424 — A bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to increase access to community health workers under the Medicare and Medicaid programs; Sponsor: Blunt Rochester, Lisa [Sen.-D-DE]; Committees: Senate - Finance

S.5425 — A bill to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a centralized application for substance use disorder grant programs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Hassan, Margaret Wood [Sen.-D-NH]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5430 — A bill to provide for research and improvement of cardiovascular health among the South Asian population of the United States, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Booker, Cory A. [Sen.-D-NJ]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5433 — A bill to authorize the Federal Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program, a comprehensive initiative to improve the health of Federal wildland firefighters, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Padilla, Alex [Sen.-D-CA]; Committees: Senate - Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

S.5443 — A bill to amend titles XI and XVIII of the Social Security Act to strengthen, increase oversight of, and compliance with, security standards for health information, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Warner, Mark R. [Sen.-D-VA]; Committees: Senate - Finance

H.Res.1558 — Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that, to maintain the health care safety net, Federally Qualified Health Centers should continue to operate under their longstanding single patient definition for delivery of

all services, including prescription drugs; Sponsor: Bergman, Jack [Rep.-R-MI-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Res.1561 — Expressing support for the designation of the third week of September as “Fungal Disease Awareness Week” and encouraging efforts to improve awareness, diagnosis, treatment, surveillance, and prevention of fungal diseases in the United States; Sponsor: Fong, Vince [Rep.-R-CA-20]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10483 — Bone Marrow Radiation Shielding Act; Sponsor: Bacon, Don [Rep.-R-NE-2]; Committees: House - Armed Services

H.R.10485 — Minuteman III Health and Safety Act; Sponsor: Bacon, Don [Rep.-R-NE-2]; Committees: House - Armed Services

H.R.10487 — To amend title IV of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to require project sponsors to offer substance use disorder treatment to persons admitted to emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Burchett, Tim [Rep.-R-TN-2]; Committees: House - Financial Services

H.R.10488 — To restore and strengthen the obligation of the Environmental Protection Agency to protect human health and the environment, to halt unlawful deregulatory actions, to require enforcement of the Clean Air Act, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Casten, Sean [Rep.-D-IL-6]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Transportation and Infrastructure; Agriculture; Natural Resources; Science, Space, and Technology

H.R.10491 — To direct the National Institutes of Health to conduct a study on the effects of 750-kilovolt or greater transmission lines, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Davidson, Warren [Rep.-R-OH-8]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10492 — To authorize the Federal Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program, a comprehensive initiative to improve the health of Federal wildland firefighters, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Dexter, Maxine [Rep.-D-OR-3]; Committees: House - Natural Resources; Agriculture; Education and Workforce

H.R.10508 — To strengthen services provided in rural areas, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Thompson, Mike [Rep.-D-CA-4]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce; Judiciary; Agriculture; Education and Workforce; Transportation and Infrastructure