



Health Policy Briefing

October 5, 2026

HELP, Finance Advance HHS Nominees

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee favorably reported the following nominations en bloc to the full Senate by a party line vote of 12-11 last week: Nicole Saphier, MD to be Surgeon General/Medical Director in the Regular Corps 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 Senate Finance Committee favorably reported out the nomination of Chris Klomp to be Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services in a 15-12 vote, and Ge Bai to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services in a 14-13 vote. The full Senate will not hold confirmation votes on the nominees until after the chamber returns from recess following the November midterm elections.

In related news, more than 2,500 physicians across the nation are urging the Senate to reject the Trump administration's nomination of Heidi Overton, MD to lead the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The [letter](#), organized by the Committee to Protect Health Care, argues that "Dr. Overton's dangerous record on vaccines and extremist anti-abortion advocacy are deeply troubling, and render her unfit to lead such a critical public health institution." The Senate HELP Committee will not meet to consider the FDA nominee until after the Senate returns to session after the midterm elections. During her confirmation hearing, Chair Bill Cassidy, MD (R-La.) questioned Overton on her role in a recent executive order focused on the childhood vaccine schedule and called on her to rebut some of the President's remarks regarding the MMR vaccine. It would take the opposition of just one Republican on the panel to sink her nomination.

President Signs Kay Hagan Tick Reauthorization Act into Law

President Donald Trump signed the Kay Hagan Tick Reauthorization Act (S. 2398) into law last week. The bill will require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to continue implementing and updating, as appropriate, its National Public Health Strategy to Prevent and Control Vector-Borne Diseases in People. It will also reauthorize Regional Centers of Excellence in Vector-Borne Disease and grants to state health departments to improve data collection and analysis, support early detection and diagnosis, improve treatment, and raise awareness of Lyme and other vector-borne diseases.

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GAO General Counsel Weighs in on Pocket Recissions

Government Accountability Office (GAO) General Counsel Edda Emmanuelli Perez sent a [letter](#) to congressional leaders last week characterizing the White House's recent cancellation of \$810 million in federal funding as unlawful and unconstitutional. "Any withholding of appropriated funds beyond their date of expiration, regardless of size, subverts both the constitutional process for enacting federal law and Congress's constitutional power of the purse," Emmanuelli Perez wrote in the letter. Both Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill are discussing ways to prevent the administration from making such pocket recissions in the future, with Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins (R-Maine) telling reporters that appropriators are "already looking at whether there's language we can put in the next set of appropriations bills that would prohibit this from happening."

Murray, Baldwin Call for Legislative Response to NIH Politicization Proposals

Senate Democrats have sent a [letter](#) to the White House urging Office of Management and Budget Director (OMB) Russell Vought to abandon any plans to exert political control over grant-making decisions at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The letter, led by Senate Appropriations Committee Vice Chair Patty Murray (D-Wash.) and Labor-Health and Human Services Subcommittee Ranking Member Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), specifically criticizes recent reports of a possible executive order to establish a commission empowered to veto NIH research awards, which followed a similar OMB proposal to revise the rules governing the administration of federal grants government-wide. The lawmakers call on congressional Republicans to "work with us on legislation to do much more to protect NIH from the Trump administration, which has proven over and over again to be dead set on picking political fights at the expense of advancing lifesaving treatments and cures for millions of Americans."

House Caucus Releases Bipartisan Report on Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy

A bipartisan group of lawmakers in the House of Representatives have released a [report](#) on how psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT) could be safely and ethically integrated into U.S. healthcare and community settings. The report follows a 2024 request for information issued by the Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy to Heal (PATH) Caucus. Responses to the RFI envisioned wide-ranging, multidisciplinary service models that include clinical settings, community-based environments, faith and ceremonial practices, group sessions, and federally qualified health centers. Responses highlighted integration services, PAT delivery options and care teams, and long-term follow-up. The report suggests that policies "should be put in place to support coordinated national data systems to monitor benefits as well as potential unintended consequences of PAT and provide an evidence-base to ensure the best possible patient care that evolves in approach with the diverse emerging pipeline of new medicines and potential medical applications over time."

E&C Republicans Remain Focused on Healthcare Fraud

House Energy and Commerce Committee Republicans have released a staff [report](#) detailing the findings of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee's investigation into the incidence of fraud in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. The report also highlights related disparities in oversight and enforcement within state Medicaid programs. Key findings include that some states do not consider fraud trends when setting required Medicaid provider risk levels, and do not regularly update the risk levels that are set. The report also asserts that states are not using their audit and investigative authorities to their fullest potential to prevent fraud from occurring, and that states, which vary in auditing capacity, are generally not focusing on high-risk providers. In related news, E&C Republicans introduced a 14-bill package on Tuesday focused on healthcare fraud, including nine new bills and five reintroductions.

Cassidy, Warner Reintroduce PBM Data Bill

Sens. Bill Cassidy, MD (R-La.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.) have reintroduced bipartisan legislation aimed at improving pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) reimbursement data and lowering the cost of prescription drugs. The Ensuring Accurate Payments to Specialty Pharmacies Act (S. 5586) would expand required participation in federal drug acquisition cost surveys to include specialty and mail-order pharmacies. This change is intended to provide more thorough data on drug acquisition costs and help ensure PBM reimbursement rates cover the complete cost of prescription drugs.

ASPR Personnel Changes

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) John Knox announced that he would be stepping down from his position at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on October 2. Sean Kaufman, the President's nominee to lead ASPR, will serve in the deputy role until his is confirmed. Kaufman's nomination was advanced by the Senate HELP Committee in July.

Recently Introduced Health Legislation

H.Res.1587 — Expressing support for the designation of September 2026 as “National Kinship Care Month”; Sponsor: Kamlager-Dove, Sydney [Rep.-D-CA-37]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

H.Res.1589 — Expressing support for the designation of October 1 as “National Latino and Latina Physician Day”; Sponsor: Ruiz, Raul [Rep.-D-CA-25]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10615 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to require State Medicaid fraud control units to conduct annual audits; Sponsor: Balderson, Troy [Rep.-R-OH-12]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10616 — To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to create a repository of certain publicly available data sets; Sponsor: Bentz, Cliff [Rep.-R-OR-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Education and Workforce; Natural Resources

H.R.10618 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to promote electronic verification of non-emergency transportation services and applied behavior analysis services under the Medicaid program; Sponsor: Evans, Gabe [Rep.-R-CO-8]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10621 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to increase the State share of recovery under laws relating to false or fraudulent claims under the Medicaid program; Sponsor: Griffith, H. Morgan [Rep.-R-VA-9]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10625 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to require State Medicaid fraud control units to conduct annual audits; Sponsor: Joyce, John [Rep.-R-PA-13]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10626 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to increase the State share of the recovery of certain overpayments under the Medicaid program; Sponsor: Kean, Thomas H. [Rep.-R-NJ-7]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10628 — To amend title XI of the Social Security Act to alter when biosimilar biological products are eligible for price negotiations under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Langworthy, Nicholas A. [Rep.-R-NY-23]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.10632 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to require certain protections for whistleblowers under the

Medicaid program; Sponsor: Miller-Meeks, Mariannette [Rep.-R-IA-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10633 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to require each State to designate a single agent responsible for certain fiscal duties under the Medicaid program; Sponsor: Pfluger, August [Rep.-R-TX-11]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10636 — Medicaid Fraud Prevention Act; Sponsor: Rulli, Michael A. [Rep.-R-OH-6]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

S.Res.912 — A resolution recognizing the 50th anniversary of the Hyde Amendment and its enduring legacy of saving the lives of more than 2,600,000 unborn children and respecting the conscience rights of the American people; Sponsor: Lankford, James [Sen.-R-OK]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.Res.914 — A resolution designating September 2026 as “National Cholesterol Education Month” and September 30, 2026, as “LDL-C Awareness Day”; Sponsor: Hyde-Smith, Cindy [Sen.-R-MS]; Latest Action: Submitted in the Senate, considered, and agreed to without amendment and with a preamble by Unanimous Consent.

S.5571 — A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to alter when biosimilar biological products are eligible for price negotiations under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Blackburn, Marsha [Sen.-R-TN]; Committees: Senate - Finance

S.Res.917 — A resolution expressing support for the designation of September as “Dystonia Awareness Month” to promote public awareness and understanding of dystonia; Sponsor: Banks, Jim [Sen.-R-IN]; Submitted in the Senate, considered, and agreed to without amendment and with a preamble by Unanimous Consent.

S.Res.918 — A resolution establishing the Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence; Sponsor: Gallego, Ruben [Sen.-D-AZ]; Committees: Senate - Rules and Administration

S.Res.925 — A resolution designating September 2026 as “National Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month”; Sponsor: Moody, Ashley [Sen.-R-FL]; Submitted in the Senate, considered, and agreed to without amendment and with a preamble by Unanimous Consent.

S.5574 — A bill to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to carry out a program of distribution of newborn supply kits to mothers of newborn infants, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Kim, Andy [Sen.-D-NJ]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5576 — A bill to establish the Artificial Intelligence Safety Board, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Warner, Mark R. [Sen.-D-VA]; Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

S.5586 — A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct surveys of non-retail pharmacy drug prices, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Warner, Mark R. [Sen.-D-VA]; Committees: Senate - Finance

S.5591 — A bill to improve support for personnel of the Veterans Crisis Line and to clarify authorities relating to crisis response protocols, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Blumenthal, Richard [Sen.-D-CT]; Committees: Senate - Veterans' Affairs

S.5593 — A bill to prevent the removal of children for sex-rejecting interventions; Sponsor: Schmitt, Eric [Sen.-R-MO]; Committees: Senate - Finance

S.5600 — To reauthorize the Traumatic Brain Injury program; Sponsor: Armstrong, Alan [Sen.-R-OK]; Introduced in the Senate, read twice, considered, read the third time, and passed without amendment by Voice Vote.

S.Res.930 — A resolution expressing support for the recognition of October 2026, as “World Menopause Awareness Month” and for global awareness and access to care during menopausal transition and post-menopause; Sponsor: Blunt Rochester, Lisa [Sen.-D-DE]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.Res.933 — A resolution expressing support for the designation of October 2026 as “National Dyslexia Awareness Month”; Sponsor: Cassidy, Bill [Sen.-R-LA]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.Res.937 — A resolution recognizing the seriousness of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and expressing support for the designation of September 2026 as “PCOS Awareness Month”; Sponsor: Warren, Elizabeth [Sen.-D-MA]; Submitted in the Senate, considered, and agreed to without amendment and with a preamble by Unanimous Consent.

S.Res.940 — A resolution expressing support for the designation of September 2026 as “Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Month” in order to educate communities across the United States about sickle cell disease and the need for research, early detection methods, effective treatments, and preventative care programs with respect to complications from sickle cell disease and conditions related to sickle cell disease; Sponsor: Scott, Tim [Sen.-R-SC]; Submitted in the Senate, considered, and agreed to without amendment and with a preamble by Unanimous Consent.

S.Res.946 — A resolution designating September 30, 2026, as “National Veterans Suicide Prevention Day”; Sponsor: Tillis, Thomas [Sen.-R-NC]; Submitted in the Senate, considered, and agreed to without amendment and with a preamble by Unanimous Consent.

S.Res.947 — A resolution designating September 2026 as “National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month”; Sponsor: Scott, Tim [Sen.-R-SC]; Submitted in the Senate, considered, and agreed to without amendment and with a preamble by Unanimous Consent.

S.5609 — A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to require States to report on anti-fraud measures relating to home and community-based services furnished under the Medicaid program; Sponsor: Moody, Ashley [Sen.-R-FL]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.5612 — A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to require hospitals receiving payment for direct graduate medical education costs under the Medicare program to report information with respect to the citizenship status of residents in an approved medical residency training program; Sponsor: Moody, Ashley [Sen.-R-FL]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.5622 — A bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to provide for criminal liability where a controlled substance is a substantial factor in the death or bodily injury of another person; Sponsor: Moody, Ashley [Sen.-R-FL]; Committees: Senate – Judiciary

S.5627 — A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to improve access to care for all Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries through models tested under the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Booker, Cory A. [Sen.-D-NJ]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.5629 — A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to permit veterans to seek a second opinion after the receipt of health care under the laws administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Rounds, Mike [Sen.-R-SD]; Committees: Senate - Veterans’ Affairs

S.5638 — A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to modernize the wage required for exempt H-1B workers, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Husted, Jon [Sen.-R-OH]; Committees: Senate – Judiciary

S.5663 — A bill to establish a program at the National Science Foundation to fund research awards to reproduce federally funded research; Sponsor: Lummis, Cynthia M. [Sen.-R-WY]; Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

S.5671 — A bill to reauthorize and improve the pilot program to support State medical stockpiles, to ensure that State, local, Tribal, and territorial public health departments or officials are consulted by the Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Hassan, Margaret Wood [Sen.-D-NH]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5672 — A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to modify certain physician payments under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Marshall, Roger [Sen.-R-KS]; Committees: Senate – Finance

H.Res.1591 — Expressing support for the designation of October 15, 2026, as “Liver Cancer Awareness Day”; Sponsor: Bacon, Don [Rep.-R-NE-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Res.1595 — Expressing support for the designation of September 2026 as “National Polycystic Kidney Disease Awareness Month”, and raising awareness and understanding of polycystic kidney disease; Sponsor: Cleaver, Emanuel [Rep.-D-MO-5]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Res.1599 — Expressing support for the recognition of September 2026 as “National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month”; Sponsor: Lawler, Michael [Rep.-R-NY-17]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Res.1601 — Recognizing September as “Childhood Cancer Awareness Month”; Sponsor: Miller, Max L. [Rep.-R-OH-7]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Res.1602 — Recognizing the importance of access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention and supporting the designation of Saturday, October 10, 2026, as “National PrEP Day”; Sponsor: Pocan, Mark [Rep.-D-WI-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10640 — To amend title XI of the Social Security Act to establish an Urban Health Transformation Program; Sponsor: Waters, Maxine [Rep.-D-CA-43]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.10643 — To increase penalties for certain violations of the H-1B nonimmigrant visa program, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Van Duyne, Beth [Rep.-R-TX-24]; Committees: House – Judiciary

H.R.10645 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make uniformly available to States certain standardized data analytic technologies to identify and prevent fraud, waste, and abuse under Medicaid; Sponsor: Balderson, Troy [Rep.-R-OH-12]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10647 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to establish a Medicaid State plan amendment option to provide medical assistance to individuals with a serious mental illness who are patients in certain institutions for mental diseases; Sponsor: Bentz, Cliff [Rep.-R-OR-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10648 — To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish inpatient treatment under the Veterans Community Care Program for a mental health condition, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Boebert, Lauren [Rep.-R-CO-4]; Committees: House - Veterans’ Affairs

H.R.10649 — To amend the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 to authorize the Attorney General, in coordination with the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, to award grants to covered entities to establish or maintain disposal sites for unwanted prescription medications, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Bonamici, Suzanne [Rep.-D-OR-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10654 — To ensure that a member separated from an Armed Force, solely on the basis that the member has pseudofolliculitis barbae, receives an honorable discharge and veterans benefits; Sponsor: Conaway, Herbert C. [Rep.-D-

NJ-3]; Committees: House - Armed Services; Veterans' Affairs

H.R.10655 — To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a study and clinical trials on the effects of cannabis on certain health outcomes of veterans with chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Correa, J. Luis [Rep.-D-CA-46]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.10658 — To direct the Secretary of Commerce to publish, on an annual basis, an assessment on United States dependency on imported, fermentation-based, biomanufacturing inputs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Davids, Sharice [Rep.-D-KS-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10666 — To extend the Frontier Community Health Integration Project Demonstration; Sponsor: Fedorchak, Julie [Rep.-R-ND-At Large]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

H.R.10676 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to strengthen coverage under the Medicaid program for certain foster youth individuals; Sponsor: Kamlager-Dove, Sydney [Rep.-D-CA-37]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10677 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to ensure health insurance coverage continuity for former foster youth; Sponsor: Kamlager-Dove, Sydney [Rep.-D-CA-37]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10678 — To permit the Byrne JAG grant to be used for the purchase of fentanyl testing kits and opioid reversal agents; Sponsor: Kean, Thomas H. [Rep.-R-NJ-7]; Committees: House - Judiciary

H.R.10680 — To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a grant program to facilitate food access in community health centers, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Latimer, George [Rep.-D-NY-16]; Committees: House - Agriculture

H.R.10692 — To restore the allowance of the premium tax credit for lawfully present individuals, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Ocasio-Cortez, Alexandria [Rep.-D-NY-14]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.10694 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to provide eligibility for nurses working in an elementary or secondary school within a health professional shortage area to participate in the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Perez, Marie Gluesenkamp [Rep.-D-WA-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10704 — To direct the Secretary of Labor to award grants for the recruitment, retention, and advancement of direct care workers; Sponsor: Scott, Robert C. "Bobby" [Rep.-D-VA-3]; Committees: House - Education and Workforce; Energy and Commerce

H.R.10706 — To amend title XI of the Social Security Act to clarify parameters for model testing and add accountability to model expansion under the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Smith, Adrian [Rep.-R-NE-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Rules

H.R.10707 — To address barriers immigrants and refugees face to entering the health care workforce, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Smith, Adam [Rep.-D-WA-9]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.10708 — To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award grants to reduce barriers to immigrants becoming nurses or allied health professionals in the United States, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Smith, Adam [Rep.-D-WA-9]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10712 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to include certain emergency response providers as eligible institutions under mental and behavioral health education and training grant program, and for other purposes; Sponsor:

Subramanyam, Suhas [Rep.-D-VA-10]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10716 — To amend title XI of the Social Security Act to clarify the authority of the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services to exclude certain entities from participation in Federal health care programs; Sponsor: Taylor, David J. [Rep.-R-OH-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.10717 — To amend title 10, United States Code, to provide wigs to TRICARE beneficiaries with alopecia, including alopecia caused by chemotherapy, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Vindman, Eugene Simon [Rep.-D-VA-7]; Committees: House - Armed Services