

## HALL RENDER'S THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON - MAY 11, 2018

### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES COST-CUTTING PACKAGE

On May 8, the Trump administration proposed an extensive packing of \$15.4 billion spending cuts. The administration seeks to cut funds from 38 programs that "are just sitting in accounts" and not being used. Almost half of the proposed cuts, \$6.96 billion, would come from the Children's Health Insurance Program that White House officials said expired last year or are not expected to be used. An additional \$800 million in cuts would come from money created by the Affordable Care Act in 2010 to test innovative payment and service delivery models.

Next, the request will go to the House Appropriations Committee, which will have 25 calendar days to craft its own bill before other House members can act on their own to bring up rescissions legislation. If the House passes this package, it will be taken up by the Senate next. There's not much chance that Congress will actually pass the rescissions package since Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says it's not a good idea. Even if Congress does not approve the request, the dollars in a presidential rescissions package are automatically frozen for 45 legislative days.

The White House plans to roll out a large rescissions package later this year. It has not been released what will be in this package, but a White House official stated that it would target "duplicative programs and things we don't think are necessary to operate the government sufficiently."

### HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE ADVANCES BIPARTISAN OPIOID LEGISLATION

The House Energy and Commerce Committee approved 25 opioid-related bills on May 9. All 25 bills were advanced with bipartisan support. The bills are intended to address many different aspects of the opioid epidemic, such as making it easier for physicians to access medical information for patients with a substance use disorder and helping doctors connect emergency room patients to follow up substance abuse treatment after being treated for an overdose. Others focus on prevention, such as using opioid alternatives for pain management, and education about opioid-related diseases.

The Energy and Commerce Committee will mark up another group of opioid bills next week. Chairman Greg Walden (R-OR) stated that the committee is on track to complete its work on opioid before Memorial Day.

### CMS ISSUES STRATEGY FOR RURAL HEALTH

On May 8, CMS released its first **strategy document** focusing on issues in rural health care. To ensure people who live in rural America have access to high-quality, affordable health care, the agency is focusing on five goals: advance telehealth services, apply a "rural lens" to agency policies, improve access to care, empower rural patients to make health care decisions and leverage partnerships to achieve these objectives.

### NEW ALLIANCE FORMED TO DETER HOSPITAL BUYING DOCTOR PRACTICES

According to a report in *Politico*, several physician groups are creating a new alliance to fight the trend of hospitals buying doctor practices and urge independent physicians to embrace value-based payments. The alliance, known as the Partnership to Empower Physician-Led Care, will encourage stand-alone practices to remain intact as Medicare and other health insurers move to alternative payment systems. According to its organizers, many payment models do not properly recognize independent practices so this, along with a lack of bargaining power, leads more doctors to sell their business to work for a large health system. The members of the alliance include Aledade, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the California Medical Association, the Florida Medical Association, Medical Group Management Association and the Texas Medical Association.

### ADMINISTRATION UNVEILS AGENDA ON LOWERING DRUG PRICES

On May 11, the Trump administration introduced a **blueprint** to "bring soaring drug prices back down to Earth." While the administration's plan does not include many new steps to bring down the actual price of drugs, it targets other parts of the health care system and emphasizes existing efforts to lower costs through more competition. The plan also states the intention to reform the 340B Drug Pricing Program by ensuring hospitals paid under Medicare Part B deliver more than one percent of their patient costs in charity care in order to receive the discounts available in the program.

## HEALTH-RELATED BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK

Rep. Tom Reed (R-NY) introduced **H.R. 5768** to amend Title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve access to diabetes outpatient self-management training services.

Rep. Keith Rothfus (R-PA) introduced **H.R. 5769** to amend Title XVIII of the Social Security Act to expand access under the Medicare program to addiction treatment in federally qualified health centers and rural health clinics.

Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) introduced **S.2830** to reauthorize the rural emergency medical services training and equipment assistance program under section 330J of the Public Health Service Act.

## NEXT WEEK IN WASHINGTON

Congress is in for a full work week next week. The House Energy and Commerce Committee will hold the second markup of opioid legislation on May 17. Also on May 17, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee will hold a hearing on the fiscal 2019 National Institutes of Health budget.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will hold its second 340B **hearing** on May 15 where the HHS Office of Inspector General and Government Accountability Office will testify. The Health Resources and Services Administration is expected to testify at a third hearing on the program focused on effective administration of 340B, but the date for that hearing has not yet been scheduled.

## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON IN HISTORY

**1877 - 141 years ago this week**, President Rutherford B. Hayes has the White House's first telephone installed in the mansion's telegraph room. President Hayes embraced the new technology, though he rarely received phone calls. In fact, the Treasury Department possessed the only other direct phone line to the White House at that time. The White House phone number was "1."

**1800 - 218 years ago this week**, Congress divides the Northwest Territory into two parts. The western part becomes the Indiana Territory, and the eastern section remains the Northwest Territory.

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