

HALL RENDER'S THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON - JANUARY 4, 2019

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN LOOMS EVEN AS HOUSE PASSES FUNDING PROVISION

This week, Congress returned from its holiday break for a limited schedule of business as lawmakers were sworn in for the 116th session of Congress. On Thursday evening, the House passed (241-190) a measure to fully fund the government agencies that have been shut down since December 22, 2018. It includes around \$11 billion for the components of the Department of Health and Human Services not funded, such as the Food and Drug Administration and the Indian Health Service. The measure also includes funding for the Department of Homeland Security through February 8, 2019.

The spending bill in its current form has little chance of ending the partial government shutdown because it will not be voted on in the Senate anytime soon. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said he will not hold a floor vote on any funding legislation until there is agreement that can pass the House and the Senate and receive President Trump's signature, which is unlikely due to the ongoing debate over border wall funding. The White House will meet with congressional leaders today to continue funding negotiations.

HOUSE PLANS FOR HEALTH HEARINGS

After lawmakers were sworn in for the 116th Congress on Thursday, House leaders announced plans for hearings on health care issues. The Energy and Commerce Committee, led by Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), announced it will hold a hearing in January analyzing the impact of the recent judicial decision in Texas declaring the Affordable Care Act unconstitutional.

Also, the House will hold a set of hearings on "Medicare for all" single-payer proposals. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) is supportive of the hearings and called for the first one to be held by the House Rules or Budget Committees. This hearing is expected to take place towards the end of the first quarter. The Energy and Commerce Committee will likely take on the other hearings related to Medicare for all, but Chairman Pallone has not agreed to schedule any yet. The other House panel with jurisdiction over health care, the Ways and Means Committee, does not have any hearings scheduled for Medicare for all. However, Chairman Richard Neal (D-MA) said he is open to discussions about the policy as "one of the many options out there."

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