

Healthcare Preview For The Week Of: September 11, 2023

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The House Is Back

This week the House returns from August recess, so both bodies of Congress will be here and working. There is a lot to accomplish prior to the September 30, 2023, deadline for Congress to act to fund the federal government. The House and Senate remain in vastly different places on levels of funding for the government. It also remains to be seen if a short-term funding agreement can be reached in time, if emergency funding (including increases for Ukraine and the Federal Emergency Management Agency) will be included, or if a government shutdown could be coming as soon as the end of September.

On the healthcare front, there's movement in the House. Last week House Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA); Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ); House Ways and Means Committee Chair Jason Smith (R-MO); and House Education and the Workforce Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R-NC) introduced the [Lower Costs, More Transparency Act](#). This bill incorporates bipartisan policy provisions that have advanced out of the three committees. These policies focus on transparency, pharmacy benefit manager reforms and reauthorizing otherwise expiring healthcare programs, such as community health center funding and preventing Medicaid payment cuts for safety net hospitals.

The bill could move to the House floor for a vote as soon as next week. We wait to learn how it will be brought to the floor. Ways and Means and Education and the Workforce Democrats did not sign on to the newly introduced bill. The Republican leadership also has to worry about what types of amendments could be offered by their own members—which could further endanger bipartisan support. That leads to speculation that the bill could be brought forth in the House under a process called “suspension of the rules,” which would require support of two-thirds of the House for passage. Although this bill may move through the House prior to September 30, 2023, the Senate is not expected to act on it. Instead, it marks a floor (or a ceiling, depending on your perspective) for negotiations with the Senate on what will likely become a year-end healthcare package.

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