

EDITION: January 8, 2018

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & PUBLIC POLICY

Your weekly dose of health care policy

CONGRESSIONAL

Congress Passes Tax Reform & Becomes Law

Both the House and Senate passed [H.R. 1, The Tax Cuts and Job Act](#) on Dec 20. President Trump signed it into law on Dec 22. The new law will permanently drop the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent and changes many individual tax rules. Some of the major [changes impacting health care include:](#)

- Repeal of the Affordable Care Act's Individual Mandate
- Expands Medical Expense Deduction for Two Years
- Creates an Excise Tax on Nonprofit Executive Compensation

MACRA HIGHLIGHTS

CMS added new 2018 MIPS and Advancing Care Information specification sheets to the Quality Payment Program Library [website](#).

HEALTH CARE ACTIVITIES ON THE HILL

Senate Finance Committee

1/9 at 10am: Full Committee Hearing to consider the

Congress Averts Dec 22 Government Shutdown

On Dec 21, both the House and Senate passed a [continuing resolution](#) to fund the federal government until January 19. The President signed it into law the following day. The short-term funding law also including short-term funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), community health centers, National Health Service Corps, graduate medical education, and the Special Diabetes Program until March 31.

Congress' 2018 Health Care To-Do List

Congress left for their holiday break with a lot of items to return to in the New Year. Some of the high priority items include:

- Funding the Government (expires Jan 19)
- Medicare Extenders (expired Dec 31)
 - With the continued delay in not passing Medicare extenders, providers may be advised by CMS as to their timely processing of claims. Under current rules, CMS has 14 days to process "clean" electronic claims.
- Health Insurance Tax (expired Dec 31)
- Medical Device Tax (expired Dec 31)
- Affordable Care Act Stabilization (CSR, etc.)
- Children's Health Insurance Program (expires Mar 31)
- Cadillac Tax (expires Dec 2019)

In addition to the above, many [non-health care related items](#) have to be done as well, including; DACA, Disaster Relief, Flood Insurance, and Tax Extenders, amongst others.

Negotiations have been occurring on all the above, but even though some policies are bipartisan in nature, an agreement on how to fund those items has not come together yet. In addition to finding ways to move the legislation with both Republican and Democratic support - it also must have both House and Senate support, which can be difficult as well. With both the House and Senate back in Washington this week, we should

[Anticipated Nomination of Alex Michael Azar II to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.](#)

Senate HELP Committee

1/9 at 10am: Full Committee Hearing on "[The Opioid Crisis: An Examination of How We Got Here and How We Move Forward.](#)"

WEEKLY TRIVIA

How many standing committees are there in the House of Representatives? Click [here](#) to find the answer.

have a better sense of what items they wish to target first.
Stay Tuned.

ADMINISTRATION

ASPE RFI on U.S. Health Care Choice & Competition

On Dec 26, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) released a [Request for Information on Promoting Healthcare Choice and Competition Across the United States.](#) They are interested in public comments about State and Federal laws, regulations, guidance, requirements, and policies that discourage or prevent the development and operation of a health care system that provides high-quality care at affordable prices for the American people, the promotion of competition in health care markets, and the limitation of excessive consolidation throughout the health care system. Comments are due by January 25.

CMS Releases Part I of MA Advance Notice

On Dec 27, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released their [Part I of the 2019 Advance Notice of Methodological Changes for Medicare Advantage Capitation Rates and Part D Payment Policies.](#) This notice provides key information about proposed updates to the Part C Risk Adjustment Model and the use of encounter data. Comments are due by March 2.

Association Health Plans Proposed Rule Released

On Jan 4, the Department of Labor released a highly anticipated [proposed rule](#) that would loosen the definition of an employer under ERISA in a push to encourage the creation of association health plans (AHPs) that would be able to cover employers from various industries. Comments are due by March 6.

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