

EDITION: January 30, 2018

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & PUBLIC POLICY

Your weekly dose of health care policy



CONGRESSIONAL

Alex Azar Confirmed & Sworn in as HHS Secretary

Yesterday, Alex M. Azar II was sworn in as the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) after being confirmed by the Senate last Wednesday in a vote of 55-43. Secretary Azar previously held the General Counsel and Deputy Secretary positions at HHS during the George W. Bush Administration. Azar has named Peter Urbanowicz as his Chief of Staff and Brian Harrison as his deputy chief of staff, who also previously worked at HHS during the Bush administration.

ADMINISTRATION

MACRA HIGHLIGHTS

CMS has updated its Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances policy for the 2017 Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) transition year to include counties affected by Hurricane Nate and additional counties affected by the California wildfires. More information can be found on their [Fact Sheet](#).

CMS Begins Rolling Processing of Therapy Claims

This past Friday, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) [announced](#) it would begin the process of releasing therapy claims for payment under current law, without an extension of the therapy cap exceptions process for 2018. CMS had previously held claims containing the KX modifier for a short period, but has begun the process of releasing on a rolling basis one day at a time. CMS notes it will still hold all newly received therapy claims with the KX modifier for 20 days before releasing on the rolling hold in an effort to minimize potential reprocessing and impact to beneficiaries while Congress determines how it will proceed with passing legislation to address the expired Medicare Extenders.

HHS Posts 2017 Accomplishments

On Jan 26, HHS released a report on its [2017 Accomplishments](#) at the agency including action on the opioid crisis, infectious disease response, public health response, and regulatory relief.

HEALTH CARE ACTIVITIES ON THE HILL

House Energy & Commerce Committee

1/30 at 11:00am: Health Subcommittee hearing on [Examining Implementation of the Compounding Quality Act.](#)

Senate HELP Committee

1/30 at 3:30pm: Primary Health & Retirement Security Subcommittee hearing on [Small Business Health Plans.](#)

Senate HELP Committee

2/8 at 10:00am: Full Committee hearing on [The Opioid Crisis: Impact on Children and Families.](#)

WEEKLY TRIVIA

Which President holds the record for brevity using just 1,089 words to deliver the State of the Union address?

Which President holds the record for the longest, in-person State of the Union address?

Click [here](#) to find the answer.

HOOPER, LUNDY & BOOKMAN, P.C.

Government Relations and Public Policy

401 9th Street NW, Suite 550 Washington, DC 20004 | Telephone 202.580.7700

www.health-law.com | [@HLBHealthLaw](https://twitter.com/HLBHealthLaw)

Copyright © 2016 Hooper, Lundy & Bookman, P.C. All rights reserved.