



Health Policy Briefing

January 9, 2023

Republican Kevin McCarthy Elected U.S. House Speaker

The House of Representatives elected Republican Kevin McCarthy (Calif.) as Speaker in the early hours of Saturday morning. The tally was 216-212, with Democrats remaining unified in support of Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries (N.Y.) and six Republicans voting present. The successful 15th ballot followed four days of votes in which 20 GOP dissidents united to deny McCarthy the required votes needed for speaker, arguing that McCarthy was not conservative enough for the position. The protracted speaker contest was one that has not been seen in modern times – not since the Civil War era has Congress required so many rounds of voting to elect a speaker.

McCarthy was eventually able to flip more than a dozen conservative holdouts to end the standoff by agreeing to many of their demands – including reverting the motion to vacate back to what it looked like prior to the 116th congress. This will allow any one member of the majority or minority party to offer a privileged resolution to vacate the chair. The holdouts also successfully demanded that the number of seats on the House Rules Committee be expanded, and that legislation be posted at least 72 hours before votes on the floor. After McCarthy took the oath of office, the House was able to swear in lawmakers and formally open the first session of the 118th congress.

House Rules Package and Legislative Preview

Republicans released their updated rules package on Friday, which is first on the agenda during Monday evening’s session. The rules package must be adopted by January 13 to process payroll for House staff. Text of the package can be found [here](#) and a section-by-section summary can be found [here](#).

An additional eight bills and resolutions will be first to be considered in the House during the 118th Congress, including [H.R. 26](#), the ***Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act*** which the sponsors state would prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.

Inside	
Expected Renewal of Public Health Emergency.....	2
Lawmakers Probe Promotion of Medical Credit Cards....	2
Stabenow Announces Decision to Not Seek Another Senate Term.....	2
Boyle to Take Leave from W&M While Serving as Budget Ranking Member.....	2
Sen. Casey Announces Cancer Diagnosis, Expects Full Recovery.....	3

Expected Renewal of Public Health Emergency

The COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) first declared in January 2020 and last renewed on October 13, 2022, is expected to be renewed this week by Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra. The Biden Administration committed to provide states a 60-day notice before ending the PHE and in the absence of such notice, it is expected that the PHE will be renewed into April rather than end on January 11.

Lawmakers Probe Promotion of Medical Credit Cards

Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) are [requesting](#) information about potentially deceptive promotions of medical credit cards. The lawmakers sent a letter to Wells Fargo & Co. and Synchrony Financial regarding their credit card offerings intended to cover expensive health care services. “Patients – often under duress because of concerns about their medical care – are being pushed into and then locked into medical credit cards despite the availability of alternative payment options that might be more beneficial and offer lower interest rates,” the letter states. The lawmakers request a response from the lenders by January 12.

Stabenow Announces Decision to Not Seek Another Senate Term

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) announced last week that she will not run for reelection in 2024. Stabenow currently serves as Chair of the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee and as chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. She is the most senior Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee after Chairman Wyden (D-Ore.). Stabenow was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1996 and became the first woman to be elected to the Senate from the state of Michigan in 2000. Reps. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.) and Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.) are reportedly considering a bid for Stabenow’s Senate seat.

Boyle to Take Leave from W&M While Serving as Budget Ranking Member

Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-Pa.) will take a temporary leave of absence from the House Ways and Means Committee this Congress, following his selection as ranking member of the Budget Committee. This arrangement is in keeping with that chosen by Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), who served on Ways and Means Committee but was also chosen to lead Budget Committee Democrats during his time in the House of Representatives. Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) has approved Boyle’s decision.

Sen. Casey Announces Cancer Diagnosis, Expects Full Recovery

Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.) announced last week that he has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. He will undergo surgery in the “coming months.” Casey stated that he expects a full recovery and expressed his confidence that he will be able to continue to serve in the 118th congress with “minimal disruption.”