



Health Policy Briefing

August 15, 2022

Reconciliation Package Sent to President for His Signature

The House of Representatives passed the [Inflation Reduction Act](#) on a party line 220-207 vote last week. The \$437 billion tax, climate, and health package gives the Medicare program authority to set the price of certain high-expenditure prescription drugs, in both Part B and Part D. The legislation would also cap out-of-pocket Part D spending at \$2,000 per year and extend expanded Affordable Care Act premium subsidies for three years. It includes a \$35 insulin cap for Medicare beneficiaries. The measure also includes \$374 billion for energy and climate programs. It would establish a 15% corporate minimum tax on large firms, a 1% excise tax on the value of stock buybacks, and an \$80 billion increase to the Internal Revenue Service budget for tax enforcement. Congress has now adjourned for August recess, with the Senate scheduled to return on September 6 and the House of Representatives scheduled to return on September 13. President Biden plans to sign the [Inflation Reduction Act](#) into law this week.

Lawmakers Ask WH to Prioritize MCED Tests

A bipartisan group of 22 members of the House of Representatives have sent a letter to the Biden administration urging them to prioritize new and affordable blood-based, multi-cancer early detection (MCED) screenings for women as a part of the Cancer Moonshot. “Unfortunately, bureaucratic entanglements are preventing most women from accessing MCED tests,” the letter states. They ask for the administration’s help in ensuring more women have access to these promising technologies.

Warren Asks Health Care Providers About Impact of Abortion Bans

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) has sent [letters](#) to five health care provider organizations requesting information about how state bans on abortion have affected women’s access to pregnancy care, reproductive care, and non-reproductive care. Warren asks how state-imposed restrictions on abortion care have affected physicians, and what guidance has been given to health care providers about how to perform their duties considering such restrictions. The letters were sent to the American Medical Association, Physicians for Reproductive Health, National Nurses United, American Pharmacists Association, and the American Hospital Association.

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Proxy Voting in House Extended Through September

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) [announced](#) that the House of Representative's temporary practice of proxy voting will be extended through at least September 26. The chamber has used the option of remote voting since May 2020, when it was first instituted in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Republicans have stated that they will end the use of proxy voting if they retake the House majority this November.

Washington Republican Herrera Beutler Loses Primary Race

Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-Wash.) lost her primary race against Joe Kent, a former Army Green Beret, last week. Her challenger was backed by former President Donald Trump in the primary for Washington's 3rd district. Beutler is the third House Republican to lose to a primary challenger after voting to impeach Trump following the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, along with Reps. Tom Rice (R-S.C.) and Peter Meijer (R-Mich.). She is a member of the House Appropriations Committee. In other election news, party leaders in Indiana's 2nd congressional district will meet on August 26 to select a nominee for the special election to finish Rep. Jackie Walorski's (R-Ind.) term and to run in the general election for a new full two-year term. Walorski and two staffers died in a car crash earlier this month.

President Signs *PACT Act* Into Law

President Joe Biden signed the [PACT Act](#) into law last week. The bill would expand health benefits for the approximately 3.5 million veterans exposed to toxic burn pits and substances like Agent Orange while on active duty. It will also require research into the effects of such toxic exposures. During the bill signing, the President spoke to the impact of this issue on his own family. Biden's son, Beau, died from brain cancer in 2015, after having served in Iraq near burn pits.

CDC Updates COVID-19 Guidance

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [announced](#) that it is streamlining its COVID-19 guidance to help the public protect themselves and understand their risk for COVID-19. Amongst other recommendation, the CDC is

- Updating its guidance for people who are not up to date on COVID-19 vaccines on what to do if exposed to someone with COVID-19 to be consistent with the existing guidance for people who are up to date on COVID-19 vaccines.
- Recommending that instead of quarantining if you were exposed to COVID-19, you wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and get tested on day five.
- Reiterating that regardless of vaccination status, you should isolate from others when you have COVID-19.
- Recommending that if you test positive for COVID-19, you stay home for at least five days and isolate from others in your home.
 - If after five days you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medication, and your symptoms are improving, or you never had symptoms, you may end isolation after day five.
 - Regardless of when you end isolation, avoid being around people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19 until at least day 11.
 - You should wear a high-quality mask through day 10.
- Recommending that if you had moderate illness or severe illness due to COVID-19 or have a weakened immune system, you need to isolate through day 10.
- Clarifying that after you have ended isolation, if your COVID-19 symptoms worsen, restart your isolation at day 0.
- Screening testing of asymptomatic people without known exposures will no longer be recommended in most community settings.

HHS Launches Environmental Justice Index

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has launched an Environmental Justice Index to measure the impact of the environment on public health and health equity. The [index](#) will provide a single environmental justice score for communities across the country, which public health officials can use to identify the areas most at risk for adverse health impacts as a result of the environment. The tool is a product of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

Recently Introduced Health Legislation

H.R.8680 — To establish a special enrollment period for family members of an individual who has died by suicide, to establish a competitive grant program to provide services and support to friends and family members impacted by an individual's suicide, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Wild, Susan [D-PA-7]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Oversight and Reform

H.R.8677 — To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with State health departments, to establish a grant program to award grants to nursing facilities to replace traditional nursing facilities with small-house nursing facilities, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Schakowsky, Janice D. [D-IL-9] (Introduced 08/05/2022)
Cosponsors: (0) Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.8668 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and make permanent the Department of Veterans Affairs loan guarantee for the purchase of residential cooperative housing units, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Maloney, Carolyn B. [D-NY-12]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.8657 — To establish an interactive online dashboard to allow the public to review information for Federal grant funding related to mental health programs. Sponsor: Rep. Blunt Rochester, Lisa [D-DE-At Large]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.8656 — To designate the clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Mishawaka, Indiana, as the "Jackie Walorski VA Clinic". Sponsor: Rep. Banks, Jim [R-IN-3]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.8654 — To prevent, treat, and cure tuberculosis globally. Sponsor: Rep. Bera, Ami [D-CA-7]; Committees: House - Foreign Affairs

H.Res.1314 — Recognizing the vital, lifesaving work of crisis pregnancy centers. Sponsor: Rep. Moore, Barry [R-AL-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Judiciary

H.R.8686 — To require the Secretary of Defense to award grants to fund research on orthotics and prosthetics; Sponsor: Rep. Cartwright, Matt [D-PA-8]; Committees: House - Armed Services

H.R.8687 — To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants to establish, or expand upon, master's degree programs in orthotics and prosthetics, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Rep. Cartwright, Matt [D-PA-8]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.8692 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to make improvements to the redistribution of residency slots under the Medicare program after a hospital closes; Sponsor: Rep. Lee, Susie [D-NV-3]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.8693 — To ensure access to cost-free monkeypox testing services; Sponsor: Rep. Maloney, Sean Patrick [D-NY-18]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Armed Services; Veterans' Affairs; Oversight and Reform; Natural Resources

H.R.8699 — To prohibit the provision of Federal funds to the National Institutes of Health for the purposes of conducting biological, medical, or behavioral research involving the testing of dogs; Sponsor: Rep. Steube, W. Gregory [R-FL-17]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce