



Health Policy Briefing

November 29, 2021

Califf Confirmation Expected to Slip to January

Senate confirmation of Robert Califf, the President’s nominee to serve as the next Commissioner of Food and Drugs, will likely be pushed to January due to a delay in submitting the necessary paperwork. Califf’s confirmation hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee is now expected to take place in mid-December, at the earliest. HELP Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-Wash.) has already endorsed the nominee. Lawmakers’ current focus on government funding, the debt limit, and the **Build Back Better** reconciliation package make a full floor vote on Califf’s confirmation before the end of the year increasingly unlikely.

Lawmakers Push for Quick MCIT Replacement

A bipartisan group of more than 60 lawmakers are [urging](#) the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to quickly propose a replacement for the recently withdrawn Medicare Coverage of Innovative Technology (MCIT) regulation. The group warns that a “permanent withdrawal of the MCIT rule may delay future innovative medical devices and diagnostic tools” and further delay patient access to breakthrough devices. The letter encourages CMS to issue a separate rulemaking to address the MCIT implementation issues raised by the agency while providing for immediate or near-immediate temporary coverage of breakthrough devices.

Dems Urge Treasury to Support International COVID Response

A group of Democrats in the House of Representatives have sent a [letter](#) to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen asking her to approve the issuance of additional Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to support developing countries in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. “By further boosting global demand for U.S. exports, assisting in a worldwide economic recovery, easing major spikes in hunger, poverty and disease, and providing financial resources for mass vaccinations abroad at no cost to the United States, a new issuance of 1.5 trillion SDRs remains a vital tool for this administration’s efforts to crush the coronavirus and build back better, both at home and abroad,” the lawmakers states. The letter was signed by Reps. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.), Chuy Garcia (D-Ill.), Judy Chu (D-Calif.), Raul Ruiz (D-Calif.), and Joyce Beatty (D-Ohio).

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COVID Panel Seeks Interview With Former FDA Commissioner Hahn

House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Chair Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.) is [asking](#) former Commissioner of Food and Drugs Stephen Hahn for documents related to his role in the response to the coronavirus pandemic. Clyburn is seeking to understand Trump administration officials' efforts to "interfere with FDA's authorization of coronavirus vaccine" and any pressure directed by the former President on the agency. The letter specifically discusses the White House's push to authorize hydroxychloroquine and convalescent plasma therapy, as well as its support for a herd immunity strategy in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Administration Begins Distribution of ARP Rural Payments

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has begun distribution of \$7.5 billion in American Rescue Plan (ARP) Rural payments to providers and suppliers who serve rural Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Medicare beneficiaries. According to HRSA, the average payment was approximately \$170,700, with payments ranging from \$500 to approximately \$43 million. More than 40,000 providers in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and six territories received ARP Rural payments.

Compliance with Federal Workforce Vaccine Mandate at 96%

Approximately 92% of federal government employees have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, according to new data released by the administration last week. An additional 4.5% have either requested or been granted exemptions from the vaccine mandate for the federal workforce and contractors. About 3.5% of the workforce have not reported their vaccination status or sought an exemption. According to the White House, "agencies are beginning a period of education and counseling, followed by additional enforcement steps" for these individuals. The vaccination rate for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is 96%.

Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health hearing "The Overdose Crisis: Interagency Proposal to Combat Illicit Fentanyl-Related Substances;" 10:30 a.m.; December 2

Recently Introduced Health Legislation

H.R.6064 — To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine for a review of examinations, furnished by the Secretary, to individuals who submit claims to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, for mental and physical conditions linked to military sexual trauma. Sponsor: Rep. Nehls, Troy E. [R-TX-22]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.6060 – To amend the Public Health Service Act to prohibit governmental discrimination against health care providers that do not participate in abortion. Sponsor: Rep. Harris, Andy [R-MD-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.6058 — To extend the authority of the Secretary of Defense to transfer funds for a certain study on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance contamination in drinking water, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Dean, Madeleine [D-PA-4]; Committees: House - Armed Services

S.Res.459 — A resolution expressing support for the designation of the week beginning on November 8, 2021, as "National School Psychology Week". Sponsor: Sen. Padilla, Alex [D-CA]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

H.R.6072 — To establish a program to assist States in establishing or enhancing community integration network infrastructure for health and social services; Sponsor: Rep. Kildee, Daniel T. [D-MI-5]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Agriculture; Financial Services; Transportation and Infrastructure; Education and Labor

H.R.6075 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to expand and improve health care services by health centers and the National Health Service Corps for individuals with a developmental disability, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Rep. Moulton, Seth [D-MA-6]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.6076 — To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration, to establish a grant program to be known as the Mental Health Licensure Portability Program to award grants to eligible entities, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Rep. Neguse, Joe [D-CO-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce