

ML Strategies Health Care Preview

Week of February 26th

This week, Congress is back in session and will continue its role in addressing the opioid epidemic. While fighting the epidemic is going to be a top priority in Congress this work period, a renewed push for gun control and mental health will likely resurface in both chambers. We should also expect to hear more about market stabilization efforts as it relates to the individual market. While we're already seeing [dire predictions](#) on the stability of the marketplace in 2019, these forecasts are dependent on potential Congressional action. There's also the DACA program and its looming deadlines that are testing the Democratic base.

There's also the issue of drug pricing which is playing out in [state legislatures](#) and will likely come up again this month. The Administration continues to raise the issue though the policy direction is unsettled. Finally, the budget deal puts drug manufacturers on the hook for closing the donut hole, making it an important issue to watch as the spending deal is finalized as manufacturers fight to roll that back.

HERE COME THE GOVERNORS

Last week, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker [touted](#) his Administration's proposed reinsurance program, which would provide \$200 million to compensate health insurers for high-cost patients. "Since Washington has failed to act on this issue, Wisconsin must lead." Several states have looked at reinsurance programs, a nod to the importance of health care on voters' minds in a tough gubernatorial election year.

The National Governors Association (NGA) met over the weekend and discussed a number of important issues. One topic included the evolving Medicaid program and state-level reforms. As many as 10 states (including Indiana and Kentucky) have submitted waivers that included work requirements, and how the Administration responds and works with states on these proposals will be closely watched by other states considering similar proposals.

A bipartisan group of Governors also unveiled a new proposal to address the health care system. The group included Republican Governors John Kasich (OH) and Brian Sandoval (NV), Democratic Governors John Hickenlooper (CO) and Tom Wolf (PA), and Independent Governor Bill Walker (AK). While the proposal does not include cost estimates at this time, expect Congress to consider the proposals considering the importance of state-level buy-in.



THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE

On Tuesday, the House Judiciary Committee will hold a [hearing](#) titled, "Competition in the Pharmaceutical Supply Chain: The Proposed Merger of CVS Health and Aetna."

On Wednesday, the E&C Health Subcommittee will hold a [hearing](#) titled, "Combating the Opioid Crisis: Helping Communities Balance Enforcement and Patient Safety."

THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE

On Tuesday, the HELP Committee will hold a [hearing](#) titled, "The Opioid Crisis: The Role of Technology and Data in Preventing and Treating Addiction."

MEDPAC & MACPAC

This week, both MedPAC and MACPAC will hold their public meetings. Both events will occur March 1 – March 2. You can view MedPAC's Agenda [here](#) and MACPAC's Agenda by clicking [here](#).

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