



Health Care Weekly Preview

Week of February 5th

This week, we are back doing a familiar two-step with Congress needing to pass a government-funding bill by Thursday. For all the issues in the health space that need to be addressed this week, it is eerily quiet out there. This could mean that negotiators are inching closer to an agreement and staying quiet to preserve the progress made. Final spending deal or another short-term CR? All health care provisions or a select few? Those are the questions to be answered in the next few days (actually hours as the House typically needs to let their Members know what is in a bill days in advance).

Of the health care provisions, it seems that Community Health Centers (CHC) has the most political support to get addressed this week. CHCs enjoy bipartisan support, are in growing need of funding stability, and with CHIP off the table this would likely be the next priority. What rides with CHCs remains to be seen, but advocates for therapy caps, MIECHV, the Special Diabetes Program, and DSH payments are rightly concerned about the implications of being left behind for the next legislative vehicle.

The challenge for Leadership this week is putting together a deal that can pass and not upset the delicate balance that is the House of Representatives. How the House of Representatives puts together a deal that does not upset this balance and can pass the Senate is the real hurdle this week. We look for signals that the spending hardliners are OK with the deal being put forth, but there are layers to the spending hardliners. On one hand, there is a group that wants additional defense spending full stop. There's another group that wants no new spending and if there is new spending then it is paid for. What both of these groups have in common is that neither wants defense-non-defense spending parity, which the Democrats are pursuing.

The biggest fear for health care stakeholders is a provision not being in a bill that looks like the final spending deal. While there have been no signals that any provision has reached the end of the line, typically, the people writing bills don't telegraph when they are about to end an extender.

THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE

On Tuesday (2/6), the House Ways & Means Health Subcommittee will hold a hearing titled, "Removing Barriers to Prevent and Treat Opioid Abuse and Dependence on Medicare." Click [here](#) for more information.

THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE

On Thursday (2/8), the Senate HELP Committee will hold a hearing titled, "The Opioid Crisis: Impact on Children and Families." Click [here](#) for more information.

DRUG PRICING

Last week, if you can believe the State of the Union was only last week, the President said, "*I have directed my administration to make fixing the injustice of high drug prices one of our top priorities. Prices will come down. Watch.*" Given the polling on drug pricing, you can expect the political class to continually raise the issue during an election year. Action on the other hand ...

The [CREATES Act](#) has received renewed interest amid calls to address the rising cost of drugs, and with a number of key Republican Senators (Grassley, Lee, Collins, McCain, Cotton, Cruz, and Paul) supporting the bipartisan legislation, it's possible this provision could make it into a final spending bill especially because it saves federal dollars at a time when spending decisions are difficult.