

ML Strategies Health Care Preview

Week of May 7th

This week, the House continues its opioid push with three separate hearings on addressing the ongoing epidemic. On Wednesday, the Energy & Commerce Committee will do its first of two markups of legislation with the second markup scheduled for May 17th. While the House is on track to pass some package of legislation by Memorial Day, its prospects in the Senate are less certain.

For one, the Senate HELP opioid package is far narrower than the slate of bills the House is considering. Senate Democrats also have considerable leverage in the types of proposals which can pass, meaning the process could grind to a crawl should a Senate package move to full floor consideration with amendments and debate. And we are still waiting on the Finance Committee. The further this debate pushes into summer, the harder it becomes to find consensus on a deal.

Later this week, the President is scheduled to give a speech on drug pricing. Sparse details are known about the substance of the speech or even the date, time and location for the speech. (Of note, the speech was expected to be held on May 8th but now is expected to be pushed back again.) Nevertheless, stakeholders on both sides of the debate are eager to see what tone the President strikes on this issue. It's difficult to see Congress taking meaningful steps on drug pricing this year, but the speech carries the potential to be the opening salvo in a new push in the drug pricing debate.

ACA 2019 RATES

As insurers begin releasing their 2019 proposed rate increases, we should get a new look at the politics surrounding the Affordable Care Act (ACA). It was [reported](#) that an insurer requested a 64 percent increase in Virginia for 2019, with another insurer [requesting](#) a 26 percent increase, and a third requesting a 15 percent increase. Virginia's senators released a [statement](#) saying these increases are a "painful consequence of the Trump Administration's efforts to sabotage" the ACA.

Both insurers cited anticipating sicker people seeking insurance due to the repeal of the individual mandate. This is going to continue to play out as more states receive premium requests for 2019 in the next couple of months. While the rates aren't final, the increases will become a growing trend due to anticipated changes in regulations.

Open enrollment for 2019 begins Thursday November 1, 2018. Voters will head to the polls the following Tuesday for the midterms. In the health space, will this be the dominant story on Election Day? Expect months of finger pointing to ensure that this is near top of mind on November 6th.



THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE

On Tuesday (5/8), the House E&C Health Subcommittee will hold a hearing, "Improving the Coordination and Quality of Substance Use Disorder Treatment." Click [here](#) for more information.

On Tuesday (5/8), the House E&C Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee will hold a hearing titled, "Combating the Opioid Epidemic Examining Concerns About Distribution and Diversion." Click [here](#) for more information.

On Tuesday (5/8), the House Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing titled, "Challenges and Solutions in the Opioid Abuse Crisis." Click [here](#) for more information.

On Wednesday (5/9), the House E&C Committee will have its first round mark up of opioid-related legislation. More details as they are available.

THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE

On Tuesday (5/8), the Senate Special Committee on Aging will hold a hearing titled, "Insulin Access and Affordability: The Rising Cost of Treatment." Click [here](#) for more information.

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