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Welcome to *Washington Update*, the weekly e-newsletter on the latest health care happenings in the nation's capital that affect APG's members.

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Election Of New House Speaker Continues Uncertainty On Health Care Issues

The election of Rep. Mike Johnson (R-LA) to the House speaker's role has put an end to weeks of upheaval but has only deepened uncertainty about the outlook for a range of health care measures in the current Congress. Factors at play include Johnson's own history as a fiscal conservative as well as the still-fractured makeup of the House GOP caucus.

Johnson previously chaired the [Republican Policy Committee](#), which advises the caucus on policy matters, when it [proposed](#) anew in 2019 repealing the Affordable Care Act and returning most authority over health insurance to the states. The timing was a full two years after efforts to repeal and replace the ACA had already failed decisively to pass the Senate. More recently, Johnson opposed the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act and its centerpiece provision allowing Medicare to negotiate some prescription drug prices.

Bid for a debt panel: Following his election this week, Johnson vowed to establish a bipartisan debt commission, echoing an earlier proposal advanced during last spring's debt ceiling debate. With House Republicans militantly opposed to any tax increases, Medicare and Social

Security advocates have already characterized Johnson's plans as evidence of a clear intent to cut both programs.

Meanwhile, Congress has just three weeks before the current continuing resolution (CR) funding much of the federal government expires on November 17, with only four out of 12 House appropriations bills passed and with House Republicans and the Senate Democratic majority far apart on spending levels. Johnson has suggested another CR extending federal funding through either mid-January or mid-April.

That timing could well obviate the passage of a now-traditional year-end package in which Congress addresses such issues as Medicare physician fees, various tax provisions, and even an extension of the Medicare clinician bonus for participation in Advanced Alternative Payment Models.

APG will continue to monitor and keep members apprised of major developments.



Long-Awaited Federal Prior Authorization Rule Nears Final Adoption

In the traditional sign that a federal regulation is nearing final adoption, a proposed federal [rule](#) to spur health information exchange and streamline prior authorization processes across multiple payers has moved to the White House Office of Management and Budget for approval.

As proposed last year by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the rule would require Medicare Advantage (MA) organizations, state Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) fee-for-service (FFS) programs, Medicaid managed care plans, CHIP managed care entities, and all Qualified Health Plan (QHP) issuers on the Federally Facilitated Exchanges (FFE), to improve the electronic exchange of health care data and streamline processes related to prior authorization.

Depending on the rule's final contours, it may or may not affect ongoing efforts in Congress to craft additional changes in prior authorization by MA plans. APG will notify members when the final rule is published and provide a briefing on the contents.



APG Announcements and Offerings

- APG [recognized](#) member contributions to a successful year for the Global and Professional Direct Contracting model – the precursor to ACO REACH. In 2022, the model's net savings to CMS was [\\$371.5 million](#).

- APG will host a Deep Dive Webinar next month on “**CMS's Plans to Integrate Episodes into Total Cost of Care Models.**” It will take place on Thursday, November 9 at noon ET. Register for the meeting [here](#).
- [Onsite registration](#) for the APG Fall Conference 2023 in Washington, DC, at the Grand Hyatt opens October 30 at 9:30 am ET.
- The Better Medicare Alliance has released a set of policy recommendations to strengthen the Medicare Advantage program. More information is available [here](#) and will be presented during the MA Coalition session at APG’s Fall Conference on Monday October 30, at 10:15 am ET.

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