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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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Budget Bills Continue Evolving In House and Senate As Concerns Grow Over Medicaid Cuts, Possible Government Shutdown

Congress's dueling two-track approach to shaping [reconciliation](#) legislation continued this week, as Senate Republican leaders [adopted](#) the first of two major such bills even as House Republicans stuck to their plan for a [single](#) large one. The Senate bill focused on funding border operations, immigration enforcement, and defense spending, with the intention of passing a subsequent measure focused on massive tax cuts and other elements that the House intends to wrap into one entire bill.

The Senate plan passed 52-48 along party lines with only one Republican, Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY), voting [no](#). Although House leaders plan a vote on their proposal for next week, they continued their [struggle](#) during this week's House recess to bring warring GOP factions into line. Adding to resistance from the right over the House

measure's unfunded costs, six GOP members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus [weighed in](#) this week in opposition to the plan's potential [deep cuts in Medicaid](#), federal higher education [grants](#) to low-income students, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. With few if any Democrats likely to vote for the measure and House Republicans holding a bare 218-seat majority, the GOP cannot afford members' defections and still pass the bill.

Continuing resolution countdown: Meanwhile, Congress has just three weeks to pass a fiscal 2025 appropriations bill or another continuing resolution (CR) of fiscal 2024 spending levels to avoid a partial government shutdown. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), who chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee and is the Republicans' top appropriator, [said](#) this week that funding negotiations are "not going well." Although another short-term CR extension may be in the offing, at least some Democrats continue to contemplate withholding their votes and [forcing a shutdown](#) if they can't secure rollbacks of Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)-led firings and cuts.



No Federal Health Agency Appears To Escape Staff Firings As Other New Trump Policies Emerge

In the aftermath of widespread [terminations](#) beginning last weekend, federal health agency stakeholders including APG are surveying the damage and attempting to discern the likely impact on the health sector. Initial counts tallied up to 5,200 firings of so-called probationary workers employed for less than two years, including 1,300 at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and thousands more at the National Institutes for Health (NIH). But amid a slew of terminations followed by [reversals](#) at agencies such as the Indian Health Service, the precise toll may not become clear for some time.

As to key agencies of interest to APG -- the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the CMS Innovation Center (CMMI) - *Politico* reported at least [80 CMS employees](#) at the Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) which oversees the Affordable Care Act, and other programs to regulate surprise billing. Some CMMI employees working on maternal health and the GUIDE model posted on [social media](#) that they had also been fired. Although former HHS agency heads [lambasted](#) the firings, efforts to block them in court have so far proven [unsuccessful](#). A separate [lawsuit](#) challenging massive cuts in the National Institutes of Health's support of biomedical research is due back before a federal judge today, as some universities [halted](#) acceptance offers to science graduate students and post-doctoral scholars.

Deregulatory moves: In a separate but related action, a White House [executive order](#) released this week ordered most federal agencies to review all regulations for “consistency with law and Trump administration policy” and develop policies to rescind or modify them. Another [order](#) terminated an advisory committee to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on Long COVID and another advisory committee to the head of CMS on health equity. APG will continue to monitor these and other administration measures for their impact on its advocacy and members’ priorities and interests.



In Case You Missed It

- HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. [told](#) HHS staff this week that he would study childhood vaccines and antidepressants as part of an inquiry into possible causes of childhood chronic disease. HHS also [launched a new webpage](#) forbidding the recognition of the existence of trans people in federal documents and programs.
- Defying expectations, the Trump Administration filed a Supreme Court [brief](#) in the case *Braidwood vs. Becerra* defending the mandate that insurance cover preventive services under the Affordable Care Act.
- A House Energy and Commerce Committee [hearing](#) on the perennial topic of potential pharmacy benefit manager reforms will take place Wednesday, February 26th at 10am ET.
- Invited speakers Stephanie Carlton of CMS and Theo Merkel, Special Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, are scheduled to address the 2025 Virtual V-BID Summit sponsored by the University of Michigan’s Center for Value-Based Insurance Design Wednesday, March 14, 12pm – 4pm ET. [Register here.](#)



APG Announcements And Offerings

- APG will host an **Emerging Trends in Health Care Webinar** on **Friday, March 21, 4:00 pm – 4:45 pm ET** with guest [Seema Verma](#), Executive Vice President and General Manager of Oracle Health and Life Sciences, and former CMS Administrator. Register for the webinar [here](#).
- The next APG Hosted Webinar, "**Guardant Shield – The Revolutionary Liquid Biopsy for Colorectal Cancer Screening,**" will take place on **Monday, March 24, 3:00 pm -**

4:00 pm ET. The webinar will be presented by Guardant. Register [here](#).

- Registration is now open for the [APG Spring Conference 2025](#) — **Kickstarting Accountable Care: Innovations for an Urgent Future, May 14-16, in San Diego, CA.** APG Partners and non-members save up to \$200 with regular Early Bird registration that ends March 14. Groups of 5 or more that register together receive an additional \$50 savings per registrant. **New this year: bundle your savings!** All APG Spring Conference 2025 registrants will have an opportunity to register for the APG Fall Conference 2025 at the lowest price of the year, with discounts up to \$400. Simply follow the link on your Spring Conference confirmation e-mail to register for Fall now!
- Sponsorship is open for the **APG Spring Conference 2025**, May 14-16, in San Diego. Visit our [Spring Conference 2025 sponsor website](#) and reserve your space today!
- Want to get more involved in APG's Federal advocacy efforts? [Join APG Advocates today](#).

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