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

Table of Contents

- **Revised Federal Vaccines Recommendations On Hold And Up In Air As Judge Rules Against Trump Administration**
- **Lawmakers Again Signal Need To Act On Drivers Of High Health Care Costs – But Don't Agree On What or How**
- **In Case You Missed It**
- **APG Announcements And Offerings**



Revised Federal Vaccines Recommendations On Hold And Up In Air As Judge Rules Against Trump Administration

Federal vaccines recommendations are now in limbo in the wake of this week's court [ruling](#) blocking the Trump administration's vaccines overhaul. Massachusetts Federal District Court Judge Brian E. Murphy's determination that the government violated federal administrative law effectively restores the *status quo ante* on vaccines recommendations to early 2025. That was before Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. reconstituted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) last June – and set in motion the remake of the childhood vaccination schedule among other vaccine shifts that followed.

Appeal ahead: HHS has already signaled that it will appeal the ruling, and a key question is whether the administration will now follow the court-issued stays on the reconstitution of ACIP and its

consequent actions. However, a planned March 18-19 meeting of ACIP did not take place following issuance of the court's decision – and the administration has already taken steps to downplay its controversial vaccines overhaul as midterm elections approach ([Washington Update](#), Feb. 27, 2026). In the meantime, the national splintering over vaccine recommendations continues: Some [30 states](#) now rely on sources other than the CDC or ACIP as the basis for childhood or other vaccine recommendations.

In a [statement](#), APG lauded the judge's decision, pointing out that Judge Murphy cited the amici brief filed in support of the underlying lawsuit by APG and the American Association of Immunologists. Said APG's president and chief executive officer, Susan Dentzer: "We are grateful that reason has prevailed, and that APG's view – that recommended vaccines, proven to be effective in disease prevention, are key to the provision of accountable health care – has been fully vindicated."



Lawmakers Again Signal Need To Act On Drivers Of High Health Care Costs – But Can't Agree On What or How

Members of Congress and multiple witnesses once again aired competing views this week on how best to address high health care costs, with most perspectives sharply divergent across party lines. As Republicans focused heavily on issues such as provider consolidation and lack of price transparency, Democrats mainly blamed recent GOP-backed policies, including Medicaid cuts in last year's reconciliation law and the recent failure to extend the Affordable Care Act's enhanced premium tax credits (EPTCs).

Consolidation concerns: In the House of Representatives, consolidation of both hospital systems and physician practices came under fire in a [hearing](#) of the Energy and Commerce committee's health subcommittee, highlighting differing opinions about whether the trend mainly constituted a cause of high health costs or an effect of other systemic problems. So-called [horizontal consolidation among hospitals](#) was blamed for driving up hospital costs, with some lawmakers pointing to the newly [announced](#) planned combination of APG member organization Sutter Health and Allina Health as the latest cause for concern. Meanwhile, physician organizations warned that payment pressures are contributing to the demise of independent physician practices and their [acquisition](#) by hospitals, other corporate entities, and private equity investors.

In the Senate, Finance committee members led by ranking member Ron Wyden (D-OR) [pledged](#) to act to lower costs and repair the nation's "fundamentally broken" health insurance system. They outlined goals, including "explor[ing] the benefits of giving all Americans access to Medicare-type choices for health care" and eliminating "Big Insurance gaming of the medical loss ratio that hides their profits." They also critiqued most Republicans' opposition to extending the now-expired EPTCs amid new KFF [survey](#) results showing that 1 in 10 people enrolled in the ACA marketplaces last year is now uninsured, while half of those who re-enrolled for 2026 say their health care costs are now "a lot higher."



In Case You Missed It

- **Health professionals and organizations in 21 states can deliver transgender health care to young people without fear of being excluded from the Medicare and Medicaid programs**, an Oregon federal district court [ruled](#) this week. It was the second decision in a week that found that actions by HHS violated federal administrative law.
- **A [lawsuit](#) brought by manufacturers challenging CMS policies to curb skin substitutes spending** ([Washington Update](#), March 6, 2026) was dismissed by a Texas federal district court, effectively ending the case and producing a win for the government.
- **The Trump administration's proposed a new [comprehensive national legislative framework for AI](#) that** repeats the administration's position that Congress should preempt state AI laws "to ensure a minimally burdensome national standard" and that states should be barred from regulating AI development.
- **A recent law enforcement raid on a Los Angeles residential home occupied by six indigent older adults exposed a clear example of Medicare hospice fraud**, Deputy CMS Administrator Kim Brandt testified at a House Energy & Commerce [hearing](#) this week. The home's owners had collected \$36,000 per month for hospice services "that were clearly never rendered," Brandt said, while the residents were malnourished and living in "unclean" conditions "no caregivers present."
- **The FDA said it will adopt independent advisers' [recommendations](#) for next season's influenza vaccine strains**, signaling that manufacturers can proceed with production for the 2026–2027 respiratory virus season.

- **House appropriators from both parties warned the Trump administration that they will [reject](#) any renewed effort to significantly cut NIH funding** ahead of the expected FY2027 budget request.
- **More than three-quarters of health policy experts surveyed believe that weakening liability protections under the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program** would reduce vaccine innovation, raise prices, and limit access, according to a new [survey](#) by the Cornell Health Policy Center published in [Health Affairs](#).
- **The Better Medicare Alliance launched a new digital ad campaign urging the Trump administration to increase Medicare Advantage payment rates** for 2027. The effort seeks to escalate pressure on CMS ahead of the final MA rate notice due in April ([Washington Update](#), Feb. 27, 2026)



APG Announcements And Offerings

- Registration is open for the **APG Spring Conference 2026: Delivery, Dollars, And Determination: Challenges and Opportunities In Accountable Care** to be held May 27-29 at the Marriott Marquis Marina in San Diego. Please [register now](#) to take advantage of the Early Bird Savings.
- **Sponsorship is now open for the APG Spring Conference 2026**, May 27-29, in San Diego. Please visit our [Spring Conference 2026 sponsor website](#) and reserve your space today.
- APG will host a sponsored webinar for APG members only presented by Merck: “**Help Prevent RSV Lower Respiratory Tract Disease in Infants in their First RSV Season**” on Tuesday, April 28, 3:00 p.m. ET. APG Members may contact Lura Hawkins at Lhawkins@apg.org to register.
- Want to get more involved in APG’s Federal advocacy efforts? [Join APG Advocates today](#).