



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

- **Lapses In Federal Public Health Policy, Leadership Gaps Persist In Wake Of Court Decision Blocking Vaccines Overhaul**
- **Democrats And Independents Press To Restart Preventive Services Task Force As Key Recommendations Stall**
- **In Case You Missed It**
- **APG Announcements And Offerings**



Lapses In Federal Public Health Policy, Leadership Gaps Persist In Wake Of Court Decision Blocking Vaccines Overhaul

Pressures are building over lapses in federal public health policy and oversight amid the fallout over the recent Massachusetts federal district court decision that at least for now has rolled back the Trump administration's vaccines overhaul ([Washington Update](#), March 20, 2026). Meanwhile, as a policy muddle continues at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rising numbers of measles cases are pointing to the need for more aggressive actions to promote vaccines.

Chain reactions: Judge Brian Murphy's March 16 ruling in the vaccines lawsuit brought by health care and public health groups did appear to spark one clear change: Robert Malone, MD, an ally of HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., [quit](#) as vice chair of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the current

makeup of which the court had invalidated. But other threatened actions appear frozen: Although a spokesperson for the Department of Health and Human Services said last week that the administration would appeal the court decision, *Politico Pro* reported last week that the administration was still mulling its response amid competing views and political realities. The administration also missed a statutory deadline this week to name a permanent director for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, leaving National Institutes of Health director Jay Bhattacharya overseeing CDC operations even after his term as acting director expires this week.

For now, the nomination of Surgeon General nominee Casey Means ([Washington Update](#), February 27, 2026) remains [stalled](#) in the Senate as key Republican senators remain doubtful about her qualifications and vague statements on vaccines. As the de facto co-lead of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, the Surgeon General has at minimum a key symbolic and operational role in advancing the nation's health. That would seem critical at a time when the nation is [experiencing](#) 1,487 new measles outbreaks in 32 states and a renewed need to push for measles vaccination amid [declining](#) vaccine uptake. As a modeling exercise by the Yale School of Public Health has [calculated](#), a 1 percent annual decline in measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccination rates could drive more than 17,000 cases and \$1.5 billion in annual costs by 2030.



Democrats And Independents Press To Restart Preventive Services Task Force As Key Recommendations Stall

A group of 19 Democratic senators and independents who caucus with them — led by Angus King (I-ME) — this week urged HHS Secretary Kennedy to restart the [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force](#) (USPSTF) after a year with no task force meetings. Kennedy had abruptly canceled a scheduled meeting last summer ([Washington Update](#), July 11, 2025), raising concerns that he sought to remake that body much as he had done earlier with the CDC's vaccines advisory committee.

Seeking a reset: In a [letter](#) this week, lawmakers called for the task force to resume work “immediately and without political interference,” highlighting the entity's role in issuing evidence-based guidance about screening tests and other interventions. These recommendations help to inform clinical practice and, by law, the task force's [highest-rated](#) recommendations must be covered by insurance without cost-sharing for consumers under the

Affordable Care Act. The task force normally meets three times per year, and with no meetings having occurred since March 2025, multiple potential recommendations with public health implications await review. An [analysis](#) by the Common Health Coalition highlights several, including for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) against HIV and screening children for exposure to heavy metals such as lead and mercury.

Lawmakers asked HHS to respond by mid-April on when the task force will resume meetings, how vacancies will be filled, and how future recommendations will be developed and reviewed. Federal officials are now expected to determine whether and how to restore the task force's operations, amid uncertainties as to whether the policy muddle affecting vaccines policy will extend to preventive services as well.



In Case You Missed It

- **A new Accelerating State Pediatric Innovation, Readiness, and Effectiveness ([ASPIRE](#)) model** will support Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Programs for children under 21 who are at risk of developing complex medical and/or behavioral needs. To be offered in up to five states and in place for ten years, the model will succeed the [Integrated Care for Kids](#) program that will end this year.
- **Organizations seeking to participate in the Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP)** can now view the [timeline](#) for applying to the program for agreement periods beginning January 1, 2027.
- **Minnesota's Medicaid Fraud Corrective Action [Plan](#)** was approved by the Trump administration, apparently averting a \$2 billion cut to the state's future federal Medicaid payments and pausing the state's appeal of federal action ([Washington Update](#), March 6, 2026).
- **The use of fax machines and paper-based claims processes HIPAA-covered entities must now [conduct standardized](#)** electronic exchange of clinical documentation supporting health care claims, secure electronic signatures and other features of the modern era.
- **A new federal [Healthcare Advisory Committee](#) that will advise Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Mehmet Oz on improving care delivery and financing** contains both well-known and unorthodox [members](#), including motivational speaker and self-help author [Tony Robbins](#) and [Elizabeth Fago](#), a major

donor to President Trump whose son, an executive in his mother's nursing home business, was pardoned by the President for tax crimes last year.

- **The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission's widely cited estimates of Medicare Advantage overpayments are overstated and flawed**, according to a new Paragon Health Institute [analysis](#) highlighting data and methodological issues.
- **Employers of physicians and other health care workers coming from abroad would be exempt from paying a per-employee \$100,000 H-1B visa fee** under proposed bipartisan [legislation](#) introduced by House lawmakers this week.
- **Out-of-pocket costs for insulin would be capped at \$35 per month for consumers with private health insurance** under [legislation](#) introduced by a bipartisan group of senators this week. The same cap is already in place for Medicare beneficiaries with Parts B and D coverage.
- **The Justice Department has opened civil rights investigations into medical school admissions practices** at Stanford University, Ohio State University, and University of California, San Diego, according to [news reports](#). The department has requested extensive applicant data and internal communications as part of a probe into potential race discrimination.
- **A record 44,344 medical residency positions were offered on Match Day 2026**, with 93.5 percent of available positions filled — but unfilled slots increased for key specialties such as primary care and family medicine. Visa policy changes also took a toll, with match rates for international medical graduates requiring sponsorships falling to a five-year low.



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 by March 27.
- **Sponsorship is also now open for the Spring Conference**. Please visit our [Spring Conference 2026 sponsor website](#) and reserve your space today.
- APG will host the next **Emerging Trends in Health Care** webinar on **Thursday, April 16, at 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm ET**.

Please join Valinda Rutledge and her guest **Amy Gleason, Acting Administrator of U.S. DOGE Service and Strategic Advisor to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for a discussion on the Health Tech Ecosystem.** You can register for the webinar [here](#).

- 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](#).