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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.

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Vaccines Broadly Endorsed By HHS Post Nominees As Administration's Cognitive Dissonance Continues

Nominees for key roles in the Department of Health and Human Services parted company with other top administration figures this week, broadly endorsing vaccines as they met with key Senate committees reviewing their nominations. Meanwhile, their current or future boss, HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., stuck with the opposite approach, [assuring](#) his followers at an anti-vaccine

conference that he would proceed with sweeping vaccine changes and telling them that they had “a strong and steadfast friend at the White House” – in other words, President Trump.

[Chris Klomp](#), the nominee for deputy HHS secretary, [told](#) approving senators on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee that battling the current measles outbreaks was a top priority for HHS and that the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine was “the single most effective public health tool” against the disease. [Nicole Saphier](#), MD, the nominee for Surgeon General, rejected Trump’s description of the MMR vaccine as “lethal” as well as his and Kennedy’s longstanding embrace of a causal link between vaccines and autism. Kennedy, by contrast, promised at the meeting of [Children’s Health Defense](#), the organization that he co-founded, that he would “be in this fight” to overhaul vaccine recommendations to the end. His remarks to the group were followed by a speech by Andrew Wakefield, the former physician whose fraudulent and eventually [retracted paper](#) first purported to link vaccines and autism.

Moving forward: Despite the apparent cognitive dissonance within the administration over vaccines, the fact that the president and the health secretary remain in charge suggests an ongoing determination at least to [revamp](#) the childhood vaccine schedule, despite legal roadblocks. Meanwhile, Klomp’s nomination appears likely to head to the Senate floor for a confirmation vote next week, while the timing for a vote on Saphier’s nomination remains uncertain. The HELP committee will also probe the views of Heidi Overton, MD, the nominee for FDA Commissioner, in a nomination hearing next week ([Washington Update](#), August 21, 2026).

In other vaccine news this week:

- Two more deaths from measles among individuals unvaccinated against the disease were [reported](#) in Pennsylvania, including that of an 18-year-old who [died](#) of a rare measles complication, encephomyelitis. The state’s governor, Democrat Josh Shapiro, and Kennedy continued their [verbal feud](#) over who was doing more to politicize the measles outbreak.
- Three Democratic members of the House Energy & Commerce Committee [pressed](#) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Erica Schwartz, MD, over her removal of reports of two earlier measles deaths in Pennsylvania from the agency’s website ([Washington Update](#), September 3, 2026).
- A Massachusetts federal District Court judge has [placed](#) on hold a lawsuit against the administration over its vaccine policies pending an Appeals Court ruling in the case. Oral arguments are [scheduled](#) for October. 6.

- A California federal District Court judge [ruled](#) that a group of Democratic state attorneys general and Pennsylvania's Gov. Shapiro have standing to sue Kennedy and colleagues over the CDC's decision last year to eliminate the recommendation for the universal dose of the hepatitis B vaccine ([Washington Update](#), December 19, 2025). However, the judge ruled, the plaintiffs lack standing to challenge Kennedy's earlier appointments to the CDC's vaccine advisory panel.



Preventive Task Force's Relaunch With New Appointees Raises Questions About Focus

The [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force](#), idled since the start of the current Trump administration, will relaunch with a new chair and seven other new appointees focused primarily on costs and specialty care, HHS Secretary Kennedy [announced](#) this week. The move raised new concerns about a shift in the panel's focus away from primary care-oriented prevention and toward more focus on specialty concerns, as well as greater emphasis on costs of preventive interventions, an area not previously under the panel's remit.

New task force tilt: Among the new appointees are the new chair, [Seth Corey, MD](#), a pediatric hematologist-oncologist from the Cleveland Clinic who specializes in treating noncancerous disorders of blood and bone marrow; Patrick Hunter, MD, a Florida pediatrician and bioethicist who has [expressed concerns](#) about gender-affirming surgery for transgender youth; and Stephen Parente, PhD, a University of Minnesota health care finance expert who served as an economic advisor in the first Trump administration. Other new appointees are heart specialists, a gastroenterologist, and diagnostic radiologist, among others. Not reappointed were the panel's two previous co-chairs, whom Kennedy fired last year.

Given the task force's important role in grading preventive interventions – which then inform which ones health insurers must cover with no cost-sharing by consumers – a potential new focus on costs and cost-effectiveness may signal a desire to pare back on preventive coverage. The health services research group Academy Health expressed [concerns](#) about the shift toward specialists on the panel, with the American Medical Association AMA [asserting](#) that “a strong primary care voice must remain central” to the panel's work. APG, which has previously [expressed its concerns](#) about

Kennedy's efforts to remake the task force, will closely monitor the work of the new panel to ensure that it retains its essential focus on primary prevention, a central tenet of accountable care.



Actual And Projected Losses In Medicaid And ACA Coverage Augur Rise In Uninsured

Health insurance coverage for many Americans continues trending downward even as more losses lie ahead in Medicaid and Affordable Care Act coverage, new reports suggested this week. The U.S. Census Bureau [reported](#) that Medicaid coverage for adults ages 19-64 fell by 0.6 percentage-points from 2024-2025, as post-pandemic changes in funding, eligibility and enrollment processes whittled more people off the Medicaid rolls. The report did not capture this year's projected [sharp declines in ACA coverage](#) from the expiration of enhanced premium tax credits (EPTCs) and other ACA changes.

Separately, two new looking-forward analyses from the Urban Institute suggest that more than three million young adults ages 19-24 stand to lose coverage from both the 2025 reconciliation law's Medicaid cuts and the EPTCs' expiration. The end of the enhanced tax credits will cut the number of young adults enrolled in ACA coverage roughly in half, to just over 900,000 by 2028, while still other ACA changes will cost more than 200,000 others to lose coverage, [one of the analyses](#) says. What's more, net premiums on ACA plans for those young adults who remain covered will rise by more than 30 percent to nearly 600 percent by 2028.

According to the other Urban [analysis](#), as many as 2.3 million young adults could lose Medicaid due to imposition of new work requirements and more frequent coverage redeterminations under the reconciliation law. The analyses' authors conclude that much will depend on how different states use data sources to automatically determine eligibility and exemption from work requirements, and make "targeted outreach" to individuals to advise them of their Medicaid coverage options.



Before Exiting Washington, Key House Health Committees Discuss Or Approve Various Health Care Measures

The House Ways & Means, Energy & Commerce, and Budget Committees all considered various health care bills this week before lawmakers hastily departed the capital until after the midterm elections. Prospects for nearly all the proposed legislation remains uncertain and will depend on multiple factors, including the election outcomes and other legislative pressures in a lame-duck session. For example, House Republican leaders said this week that they will prioritize passing emergency defense [funding](#) to help cover the costs of the Iran war and increase the Pentagon's base budget. But such measures could require cuts in Medicare and Medicaid as offsets, rather than allowing for additional spending, increasing the uncertainties over what may lie ahead post-election.

Nonetheless, bills approved by the Ways & Means panel included the following:

- [H.R. 6130](#), which would extend Medicare coverage to early detection screening tests for Alzheimer's for specific populations as of 2028
- [H.R. 5439](#), which would allow hospitals to partner with other organizations to deliver meals to Medicare patients post discharge
- [H.R. 4093](#), which would require CMS to publish fuller data to allow better comparisons between spending on Medicare Advantage versus fee-for-service

The House Budget committee approved [H.R. 4464](#), which would allow the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to estimate savings from preventive health measures and certain interventions for diseases such as cancer and diabetes beyond the standard ten-year budget window.

The Energy & Commerce committee reviewed two Medicare physician payment reform bills, [H.R. 9693](#) and [H.R. 8622](#) ([Washington Update](#), September 11), along with cybersecurity legislation modeled on S. [3315](#) that would direct HHS and other agencies to toughen cybersecurity requirements on private health-care-related entities. A separate bill, [H.R. 9908](#), would direct HHS to develop a strategy to expand the workforce to address cybersecurity for rural hospitals.



In Case You Missed It

- **The Advancing Chronic Care with Effective, Scalable Solutions (ACCESS) Model has [added](#) four additional tracks** focused on heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), substance use disorders, and tobacco cessation for participating organizations beginning

April 2027. And a new ACCESS [Coalition](#) sponsored by APG and three partner organizations will foster collaboration among physicians and ACOs and the technology-oriented participants in the model.

- **Funding appropriated by Congress for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) in fiscal 2026 may be in jeopardy** as Senate appropriators [call](#) on HHS to release information on how tens of millions of dollars will be spent by the agency before the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30.
- **A band of House and Senate Democrats would ban all for-profit corporations, including insurance companies, managed services organizations, and private equity funds, from owning or controlling all medical practices** under [proposed legislation](#) that they unveiled this week. APG opposes the measure, as it would [render illegal](#) many of the arrangements under which dozens of APG's members operate.
- **New limits on Medicaid state-directed payments and provider taxes under the 2025 reconciliation law and subsequent regulation will shrink Medicaid spending by more than a quarter in several states and pose serious financial strains** on providers and enrollees' coverage losses in still others, a new [analysis](#) published in *Health Affairs* says.



APG Announcements And Offerings

- [Registration is now open](#) for the **APG Fall Conference 2026 - From Policy To Practice: What's Next For Accountable Care?** to be held November 18-20 at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland near Washington, DC. Register now for Early Bird savings ending Friday, October 9.
- [Sponsorship registration](#) is also now open for the Fall Conference. Please visit our Fall Conference 2026 sponsor website for more information about sponsorships and exhibitor opportunities.
- Join the APG hosted webinar titled **"Intercepting Chronic Disease: Utilizing Preventive Diagnostics to Improve Patient Population Health,"** on **Tuesday, September 22, 3:00pm ET** presented by Quest Diagnostics. The webinar is open to the public. Register [here](#).
- Learn more about **APG's Group Purchasing Program**, where a variety of companies are offering special pricing to APG

members during a webinar on **Thursday, September 24, 2:00 pm ET**. Register [here](#).

- **Want to get more involved in APG's Federal advocacy efforts?** [Join APG Advocates today](#).

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