



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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Reversals Of Multiple Trump Administration Health Policies Targeted By Democrats Anticipating Election Victory

Repealing the Medicaid cuts in the 2025 reconciliation law, barring political interference with federal vaccine recommendations and enacting broad reproductive rights and maternal health agendas are emerging as top priorities for House Democrats amid their increasing confidence that the midterm elections will hand them back control of the chamber. Unknown at this point is the fate of the Senate – let alone whether politics will have shifted enough in 2027 to overcome ongoing opposition from many Republicans and President Trump.

A House Democratic working group [plan](#) submitted to House Minority Leader Hakeem Jefferies (D-NY) last month aims to reverse multiple Trump administration policies, from its overhaul of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and federal

vaccine recommendations to its proposal for politicized oversight of federal biomedical research funding. Cited specifically as priorities for passage in the first 100 days of the next Congress are a [bill](#) to codify ACIP's practices and require it to draw on the "best available, peer-reviewed scientific evidence;" a [bill](#) to preserve insurance coverage of long-recommended vaccines without consumer cost-sharing; and a [bill](#) to prohibit political appointees' review of grants from the National Institutes of Health as the White House recently threatened ([Washington Update](#), Sept. 25, 2026). Also on Democrats' list are a [bill](#) to create a nationwide statutory right to abortion care; a [package](#) of 14 bills aimed at curbing maternal mortality and disparities; a [bill](#) establishing a statutory right to obtain contraceptives; and a [bill](#) to advance research and care for menopause, among many others.

Senators weigh in: Senate Democrats are also readying an agenda for action should they take control of that chamber as well. APG [responded](#) this week to a request for information from Senate Finance Committee Democrats seeking stakeholders' views on measures such as expanding health insurance coverage and enhancing transparency over insurance claims denials. Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA), who also serves on the Finance Committee and is now running for a fourth term, proposes a broad health care reform [bill](#) that includes creation of a new public health insurance option and reversing various 2025 reconciliation law provisions, including by reinstating higher federal payments for states that opted into the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act.

As always, APG maintains its posture of working on a bipartisan basis to support policies that enable the provision of high quality, patient-centered health care that is fully accountable for costs and quality.



CMS Cites Strength, But Market Exits, Cost-Sharing Hikes To Mark Medicare Advantage Offerings In 2027

Looking through what appeared to be rose-tinted glasses, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) this week [pronounced](#) the outlook for Medicare Advantage (MA) "strong" and heralded lower premiums as the nearly two-month open enrollment period begins on Oct. 15. But the reality seems to be more complex, with multiple MA organizations retrenching and scaling back benefits after several years of pressure on CMS's MA payment rates.

Disruption: CMS said that weighted average premiums for MA plans were projected to fall 16.5 percent from 2026 to 2027; that about eight in 10 enrollees could keep the same plan that they had in 2026 and at the same or lower premiums; and that more than 99 percent of Medicare beneficiaries would have access to at least one MA plan. CMS administrator Mehmet Oz, MD, MBA, claimed credit for lower premiums, somewhat implausibly ascribing the decline to the agency “slashing handouts to big insurance companies.” But the reality is that the number of MA plans on offer is declining in [28 states](#), with the largest MAOs such as UnitedHealthcare, Humana, and Aetna leaving anywhere from 57 to 140 counties. Millions of enrollees will thus be forced to switch plans. Outside analysts took issue with the lower premium forecast and said many enrollees’ out-of-pocket payments would also rise, *Modern Healthcare* reported.

With APG member organizations caring for an estimated one in three MA enrollees nationwide, APG continues to argue that stability is essential in CMS’s support for the MA program, as the coming year’s enrollment disruptions are likely to attest. At the same time, APG concurs with the [MA reform agenda](#) set forth this week by the Better Medicare Alliance, which would continue to strengthen the program through further streamlining of prior authorization, ongoing refinements in risk adjustment methodologies, and other needed enhancements. Many of these echo proposals APG made last year in its own [report](#) about changes needed in both MA and traditional Medicare, *Medicare Done Right: Prescriptions For Success*.



In Case You Missed It

- **The nomination of Nicole Saphier, MD, as Surgeon General advanced out of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee this week** on a 12-11 party line vote. A full Senate vote on the nomination is not expected until after the midterm elections.
- **Cancellation of \$810 million in congressionally-approved funding for a number of health-related projects was [proposed](#) last week by the Trump administration**, including nearly 10 percent of the total budget for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The Government Accountability Office (GAO) [reasserted](#) that the move was illegal.
- **The U.S. Treasury is now [mailing out the \\$500 checks](#) promised by President Trump to about 950,000 Affordable**

Care Act enrollees, including many whose enhanced premium tax credits expired last year. The administration differs over the rationale: The president continues to claim the funds represent “overcharges” by the Biden administration, but CMS Administrator Oz now says that they are a “reward” to people for maintaining their health coverage.

- **[Restrictions](#) on Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program eligibility for many lawfully present immigrants, such as refugees and asylees, took effect on Oct. 1** under provisions of the 2025 reconciliation law.
- **A health care cybersecurity [bill](#) sponsored by Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) was passed by the full Senate** before it departed Washington this week until after the election. No analogous legislation has yet passed the House of Representatives.
- **A sharp increase in patients being coded by hospitals for complex conditions with the aid of AI tools is adding tens of millions of dollars to health care spending and driving higher premiums and out-of-pocket costs**, even though the care delivered is largely unchanged, according to a new [analysis](#) of Blue Cross Blue Shield claims data.
- **Republican attorneys general from 10 states [petitioned](#) the Supreme Court to halt enforcement of the “shield laws” in New York, California, and Massachusetts that protect providers who prescribe abortion pills by telehealth** and mail them to people in states where abortion is banned.
- **Artificial intelligence could free people from “medical tyranny” by contravening the advice of human medical experts, including about vaccines, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. [told](#) a Make America Healthy summit this week. The comment drew [criticism](#) from six major physician organizations, which said in a statement that physicians “must help lead the responsible development and use of AI in medicine.”**



APG Announcements And Offerings

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

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