

Updates from the Hill

- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has released a proposed rule to expand access to health information and improve the prior authorization process. This rule aligns with Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act (S. 3018/H.R. 3173), which ARN just sent a [letter](#) to the Hill on. The [proposed rule](#) and a [fact sheet](#) are available for your review.
- Lawmakers have returned to Washington for the "Lame Duck" session (the period after the midterm election before the next Congress is sworn in January) with several pressing issues to address, including government funding, which expires on December 16. Lawmakers must pass Fiscal Year ("FY") 2023 appropriations legislation or an extended "continuing resolution" of funding at FY 2022 levels in order to avert a government shutdown. Another top priority for healthcare providers will be addressing Statutory "PAYGO" which, if not addressed, will impose a four percent sequester (on top of the two percent sequester which was reinstated in July) on all Medicare claims. Healthcare industry groups are also asking Congress to address the impending cuts to the physician fee schedule, where they face an across the board cut of 4.5%.
- Many are expecting a short-term [continuing resolution](#) (CR) which may last through December 23rd or even as late as January 2nd. Some Republicans are advocating a CR that lasts into the new 118th Congress where House Republicans will have a majority. Democrats have threatened a yearlong CR if agreement on the omnibus is not reached soon, which would wipe out any defense or nondefense increases, invalidate proposed report language, and foreclose the possibility of earmarks, or Congressionally directed spending.
- If a short or long term CR is passed, incoming House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) will have a big role in budget talks, read more about it [here](#).
- The Verifying Accurate Leading-edge IVCT Development (VALID) Act is being revised to exempt some academic centers in response to the academic medical community in hopes to get the legislation passed. Read more about it [here](#).
- Today, the House Oversight and Reform Committee's Coronavirus Crisis Subcommittee will release a [report](#) for the end of this session of Congress. The renewal of this subcommittee is being decided by Republican leaders. If the Subcommittee remains in the 118th Congress, it may be used to investigate the origins of COVID.
- Early this week, the House passed the Jackie Walorski Maternal and Child Home Visiting Reauthorization Act (H.R.8876), reauthorizing the Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program with an overwhelming majority vote of 390-26. Without enactment of a reauthorization, MIECHV will expire with the CR on December 16th.
- On December 8, the House passed the FY 23 National Defense Authorization Act with a vote of 350-80.

Administration Updates

- With a focus on harm reduction, addiction treatment drugs have been utilized at a higher rate in the past year. These strategies aim to decrease overdose and related death and has been successful so far, read more about it [here](#).
- On December 2, CMS released a Frequently Asked Questions [FAQ](#) sheet about the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021.
- Please find the U.S. Government Accountabilities Office's (GAO) [tracking sheet](#) to see a breakdown of how agencies receive and distribute their funding.
- CMS recently issued a [proposed rule](#) intending to improve both patient and provider access to health information. This new process aims to enhance the prior authorization process and increase transparency and efficiency.
- The current aim to implement a \$2000 spending cap on Medicare beneficiaries' out-of-pocket costs has been noted to be high priority for the Biden Administration. This is in addition to other provisions of the law such as drug pricing, read more about it [here](#).
- The [White House Summit](#) on STEMM Equity and Excellence hosted by the White House OSTP and The American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation will be held on Monday December 12th. The event will be livestreamed [here](#).
- The White House has launched a [National Opioid Overdose tracker](#) aiming to highlight non-fatal overdoses.

Health Policy Updates

- The National Institutes of Health is planning to review and assess a request made to lower cancer drug costs, read more about it [here](#).
- On December 8, FDA authorized COVID-19 booster shots for children as young as 6 months.
- A panel of experts from the Reagan-Udall Foundation recommend in an FDA-commissioned report that the Food and Drug Administration and Congress should establish a [separate agency](#) under HHS with a food focus. This comes in addition to other recommendations offered in the report about ways to restructure the FDA to combat the amount of "indecisiveness" the current system has created.