

Allies for Independence Washington Insights

Week of December 11, 2023

CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

All signs point to Congress wrapping up the legislative year this week. It has been a year of bare minimums, with scores of issues in a bottleneck due to highly politicized issues like the debt limit and government funding. The year ends with very few previously seen as must-pass items completed, and a mounting list of items and other priorities to deal with in 2024. Congress' final action may very well be approving the compromise National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), with modest progress being made towards reauthorizing the 2018 substance use disorder recovery package.

Democrats are largely divided over how to negotiate with Republicans around immigration reform and border security, while remaining committed to finding a way to unlock aid to allies overseas. If this is not addressed this month, it will remain a focal point into next year, and could become a major political issue as the 2024 election heats up.

With a notable number of upcoming retirements among House Democrats, stakeholders are looking to who may ascend into key health care roles in 2025. At Energy & Commerce, it looks like Rep. Diana DeGette (CO) is next in line to assume the top post on the Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee, who has championed major bipartisan health care issues like the 21st Century Cures Act and ARPA-H. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (IL) and Rep. Doris Matsui (CA) may also re-enter the health subcommittee with at least three seats opening up next Congress.

2024 is going to be an incredibly important year for Congress and the state of health care. We will get an early preview of the Administration's priorities during the State of Union, and how it engages Congress in the looming showdown over government funding.

ON THE RADAR

CMS Releases Guidance on Worker Registries for HCBS Programs

This week, CMS released new guidance on how states can create worker registries for HCBS programs. Also known as worker management platforms, these registries can serve as a bridge between individuals needing services and individuals qualified and available to provide those services. These types of workers included on a registry can vary according to state preference and may include position titles such as home

care worker, direct care worker, direct support professional, and others. Registries can also serve a variety of purposes, including supporting screen staffers, providing access to training, and facilitating access to workforce benefits.

As Congress grapples with strengthening access to HCBS, the Administration will look to initiatives like this to encourage states to streamline access for HCBS. If you are interested in reviewing the guidance, please [click here](#).

Bipartisan Legislation in Senate to Block Administration Nurse Staffing Minimums Rule

A bipartisan group of Senators unveiled legislation this month that would block HHS from finalizing the proposed nursing home staffing rule. It's identical to [H.R. 5796](#) introduced by Rep. Michelle Fischbach (R-MN) in September, but that bill only has 19 Republican cosponsors.

The Senate bill is being co-led by Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE), Roger Marshall (R-KS), James Lankford (R-OK), Jon Tester (D-MT), Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ.), Joe Manchin (D-V.), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Angus King (I-ME). The legislation would also establish an advisory panel on nursing home staffing and make recommendations to address workforce shortages.

You can view the press release and full list of endorsers [here](#).

House Committee Advances WIOA Reauthorization

The House Education and the Workforce Committee advanced bipartisan legislation reauthorizing federal workforce development programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, paving the way for the first revamp of the legislation in nearly a decade. The reauthorization does not make changes to vocational rehabilitation services.

The reauthorization is an important step forward on issues impacting the workforce and job training, although its path forward in Congress is less than clear given the divisions over funding domestic programs. For more information on the legislation, please [click here](#).

New Funding Opportunities on Rehabilitation for Individuals with Disabilities

ACL's National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) is announcing a new funding opportunity for the Switzer Research Fellowships Program. The purpose of this program is to build research capacity by providing support to highly qualified individuals, including those who have disabilities, to conduct research on the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities. This may include research, demonstration projects, training, and related activities to develop methods, procedures, and rehabilitation technology that maximize the full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, family support, and economic and social self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities.

The deadline to apply is January 30, 2024. For more information, please [click here](#).

ALLIES FOR INDEPENDENCE POLICY SYMPOSIUM

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who attended the Allies for Independence Policy Symposium. It was a fantastic event with a variety of speakers who shared updates on important policy issues, including the landscape around self-directed care, home- and community-based services (HCBS) funding, reforming the pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) industry, and insurance industry updates. Thank you to all the speakers for making this an enormously successful event.

If you are interested in re-watching the event, you can do so by [clicking here](#). Please enter this passcode to watch the event: UigT%F9.

RECOMMENDED READS

- *The Hill* – [Fix needed now: America’s long-term care financing system is broken](#)
 - *The Street* – [Navigating the Complex Landscape of Long-term Care in an Aging America](#)
 - *New York Times* – [Facing Financial Ruin as Costs Soar for Elder Care](#)
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Allies for Independence promotes inclusion, equity, and economic security across the lifespan!

Contact us!

For questions, please contact

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