

Appropriations and Budget Updates

- With the November 17 continuing resolution (CR) deadline looming, Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-LA) has said that he wants to extend spending authority until January 15. However, on Thursday, Speaker Johnson [proposed](#) a “laddered CR.” Speaker Johnson described the plan as a continuing resolution that “extends individual pieces of the appropriations process, individual bills.” As described, this unprecedented proposal would create different funding deadlines for each of the twelve fiscal 2024 bills. Notably, Speaker Johnson [floated](#) other spending plans during the week which included extending funding through January 15, and also a CR that would continue to fund the government but at lower levels than current funding.
- As it currently stands, the House has passed half of their spending bills, with Wednesday’s passage of the [Legislative Branch bill](#) marking the sixth of the twelve appropriations bills needed. On Monday, the House Rules Committee [announced](#) that it “may meet the week of November 13 to provide for floor consideration of H.R. 5894,” the House’s version of the FY 2024 Labor-HHS-Education spending bill. The bill text has some changes compared to the bill approved by the House Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee on July 14. A comparative print outlining changes to the bill text to be considered by the committee versus H.R. 5894 can be found [here](#). On Friday, the House is back to vote on an Interior-Environment spending bill.
- On Thursday night, the House also [passed](#) a \$14.3 billion Israel [aid package](#) offset by cuts in Internal Revenue Service (IRS) spending appropriated through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The White House has [threatened](#) to veto the bill over the IRS spending provision. Notably, the CBO [scored](#) the bill as a \$12 billion cost to the government, and the bill is unlikely to be taken up in the Senate.
- Congresswoman Kay Granger (R-TX), Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, [announced](#) on November 1 that she will not seek reelection to Congress in 2024, leaving an open seat on the Appropriations Committee. Granger’s congressional career is marked by significant “[firsts](#),” she was the first Republican woman elected to the House from Texas, and the first Republican woman to chair the Appropriations Committee.
- On the Senate side, the Senate [passed](#) their “minibus” appropriations vehicle comprised of the Agriculture-Food and Drug Administration (FDA) bill, the Military Construction-Veterans Administration (VA) bill, and the Transportation-Housing and Urban Development (HUD) bill in an 82-15 vote on Wednesday. Additionally, the Senate Appropriations Committee has [announced](#) that they have rescheduled their hearing to review the President’s domestic supplemental request for the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Homeland Security. The hearing has been rescheduled with HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra for Wednesday, November 8.

Hill Updates

- Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Chair of the Senate HELP Committee, Ron Wyden (D-OR), Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) [led](#) 44 of their Senate colleagues in a [letter](#) urging the Biden Administration to require federally- and state-

regulated health insurance plans to fully cover over-the-counter (OTC) contraceptives, with no out-of-pocket costs, co-pays, or prescription requirements. The letter highlights that Opill, the first-ever FDA-approved OTC contraceptive which will become available in early 2024, should be included in the list of OTC products available without a prescription.

- Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) [announced](#) on October 30 that he will not seek reelection to Congress in 2024. Blumenauer's congressional career includes his leadership on transportation and infrastructure, founding and co-chairing the National Bicycle Caucus and the Neuroscience Caucus, and federal cannabis reform.
- On November 2, Senate Finance Committee Chair Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Ranking Member Mike Crapo (R-ID), released [a discussion draft](#) including policies aimed at expanding mental health care under Medicaid and Medicare and reducing prescription drugs costs. The package includes Medicaid and Medicare provisions that are set to expire this year, along with updates to Medicare payment to support physicians and other health professionals. The committee plans to mark up the bill next Wednesday, November 8.

Administration Updates

- On October 27, the Biden Administration, through the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Labor, and the Treasury, along with the Office of Personal Management (OPM), [released](#) a proposed rule on the No Surprises Act's Federal independent dispute resolution (IDR) process. The proposed rule seeks to improve communications between payers, providers, and certified IDR entities; adjust Federal IDR timelines; establish new batching criteria; create a more efficient Federal IDR process; and modify the administrative fee structure to improve accessibility of the process.
- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [issued](#) a final rule on October 27 updating payment rates and policies for the end-stage renal disease (ESRD) prospective payment system (PPS) for renal dialysis services provided to Medicare beneficiaries on or after January 1, 2024. Additionally, the rule updates the acute kidney injury (AKI) dialysis payment rate for renal dialysis services furnished by ESRD facilities for calendar year 2024. Finally, the rule updates requirements for the ESRD Quality Incentive Program.
- The Center for Medicaid & CHIP Services at CMS is [collecting](#) comments regarding processes for assessing compliance with mental health parity and addiction equity requirements in Medicaid managed care arrangements, Medicaid alternative benefit plans (ABPs), and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Comments are due December 4, 2023, and must be submitted to the following email address: MedicaidandCHIP-Parity@cms.hhs.gov.
- President Biden [issued](#) an [executive order](#) establishing new standards for artificial intelligence (AI) concerning security and privacy protections and requiring tech developers to safety-test new models. The order sets [minimum standards](#) for how the US government uses algorithms to make decisions that impact the "rights and safety" of the public. Concerning AI in healthcare, the order includes a call for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to create an AI task force to

establish a safety program to gather and remedy reports of unsafe healthcare practices involving AI.

- On November 1, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) [announced](#) that researchers have developed an approach to potentially increase the effectiveness of T-cell-based immunotherapy treatments, such as CAR T-cell therapy, against solid tumors. Specifically, in early research on animal models, the enhanced T-cell therapies were effective against cervical cancer and neuroblastoma, which is a common solid tumor in children.

Health Policy Updates

- According to a new [report](#) on how medical students view the future of their careers, a quarter of medical students are considering quitting medical school largely due to concerns about their mental health and finding a study-life balance. The report, “Clinician of the Future: Education Edition,” was released by the health science and journal publisher Elsevier, and surveyed students from 91 countries between April and May of 2023. The report found that 12 percent of medical students around the world were considering quitting their studies, but among U.S. students, this percentage more than doubled to 25 percent.
- The National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) at the CDC released a [report](#) finding that U.S. infant mortality rate has risen for the first time in over two decades. Specifically, the report found that there were 5.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2022, compared to 5.44 per 1,000 live births in 2021—thereby constituting the first year-over-year increase since 2001 to 2002.

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