



News from Congress:

October 2019—The Senate managed to pass a group of non-controversial fiscal year (FY) 2020 spending bills last week. Disagreements still loom regarding overall spending allocations for the larger Defense and Health and Human Services bills, as well as border wall funding. The current stopgap measure expires Nov. 21 and without agreement, lawmakers will have to decide how long to continue to fund the government at current levels to avoid a shutdown. Some House Democrats have supported a continuing resolution (CR) that runs through mid-January 2020, while Senate Republicans favor a CR extending to early spring.

Oct. 28, 2019—The House passed, H.R. 4334—the Dignity in Aging Act of 2019. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) did a [financial analysis of the costs](#) of the reauthorization earlier in the month. CBO found the law's programs would receive discretionary appropriations of \$2.1 billion for FY 2019 and would authorize \$12.5 billion over 2020-2024 for Older American's Act (OAA) programs. CBO estimated the costs of implementing the bill would cost \$10.9 billion over the same period and \$1.4 billion after 2024 with the assumption that the bill would be enacted at the beginning of 2020.

Oct. 22, 2019—The Republican Study Group released a [health plan proposal](#). The proposal includes several changes to existing Affordable Care Act (ACA) law including: removal of the ACA's 10 essential health benefits, preventative cost-sharing, community ratings and single risk pool requirements

among others. It also explores allowing individuals to use Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) to be able to pay for premiums for individual marketplace plans removing current requirements that they can only be used with high deductible plans. The proposal also includes measures for those with high-risk medical conditions to be able to access state-run "Guaranteed Coverage Pools," with states being required to operate the pools and allowing them to tailor the pools to the specific needs of the state. It would also undo Medicaid expansion and provide federal grants to states to assist with enrolling lower income individuals. The plan comes as an alternative to several different Democratic legislative proposals over the past year to reform health care.

From the Administration:

October 2019—The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) released [new guidelines](#) for prescribers around long-term opioid use.

Oct. 1, 2019—HRSA released [2018 data](#) on the health and health care needs of children as well as information about their families and communities.

Oct. 4, 2019—The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released [a report](#) on 2016 deaths from violence-related injuries. The report found suicide rates were highest among non-Hispanic American, Indian/Alaska Native and white males, with homicide rates highest among non-Hispanic black males. The report also looks at mental health programs data including:

intimate partner problems, interpersonal conflicts, and acute life stressors as primary causes for different types of violent death.

Oct. 16, 2019—Acting Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Norman Sharpless released a [statement](#) on the administration's continued efforts to enhance patient access to high quality, low-cost generic drugs.

Oct. 4, 2019—Sharpless released a [consumer warning](#) to “stop using Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) vaping products” while there is an ongoing investigation into lung illnesses.

Oct. 26, 2019— Oct. 26 was National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. The day addresses the public safety and public health issues of misusing controlled prescription drugs, which affected 9.9 million Americans in 2018. Police stations, pharmacies and community centers hosted the prescription drug [takebacks at over 4,000 locations](#).

Oct. 28, 2019—The CDC [released a new report](#) providing the first analysis of the lung injury deaths associated with vaping.

From the Courts:

Oct. 11, 2019—A federal judge in New York [blocked the administration's](#) implementation of the “public charge” rule. The rule would have added more restrictions for immigrants looking to gain legal status based upon their likelihood of relying on public programs, including programs like Medicaid or subsidies provided through Affordable Care Act (ACA) plans. The decision is not a final ruling and it is likely the Department of Justice (DOJ) will appeal it.

Oct. 2, 2019—A federal judge [ruled in Philadelphia](#) that a nonprofit's plan to open a facility where people could use drugs under medical supervision does not violate U.S. law. The judge said a 30-year-old law applicable to certain types of locations referred to as “crack houses” would not apply to the organization's overdose-prevention proposal, a point brought up by DOJ officials.

Funding Announcements:

July 2019—HRSA is currently accepting applications for the [Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program](#). Application deadline is Nov. 8, 2019.

September 2019—HRSA [announced \\$57.5 million](#) in funding for up to 52 state and regional Primary Care Association Agreements. The funding will support training and technical assistance directly and through collaborative partnerships to existing and potential health centers. [Applications are due](#) by Friday, Nov. 8.

October 2019—The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is currently accepting grant applications for a “Strategies to Improve Health Outcomes and to Reduce Disparities in Rural Populations.” NIH will award up to \$350,000 for research that promotes a greater understanding of the challenges in getting to better health outcomes and work to develop evidence-based interventions. [Applications are due](#) by Dec. 13, 2019.

October 2019—HRSA announced funding for a [Rural Health Network Development program](#); the agency is expecting to invest \$13 million to support up to 46 integrated rural health care networks addressing community needs. The networks need to combine the functions of participating entities and include skilled, experience staff. Applications are due by Monday, Nov. 25, 2019.

Spotlight On:

September 2019—*Our American States* podcast released an episode on, “Homeless Youth: Risk Factors of the Venerable.” Listen [here](#) or wherever you get your podcasts.

Oct. 3, 2019—NCSL published a brief on the CDC's 6|18 initiative, [“Improving Health and Controlling Costs in Medicaid: The 6|18 Initiative.”](#) The initiative partners public health

agencies with Medicaid to improve health outcomes and reduce costs for six specific chronic conditions.

Oct. 9, 2019—NCSL recently published a brief on “[Beyond the ABCs and 123s: Supporting Social and Emotional Development in Early Learning Settings](#).” This brief looks at the important role early childhood educators play in supporting the social and emotional development of children birth-5 and highlights opportunities for state policymakers to support the well-being of both the ECE workforce and early learners.

Nov. 12, 2019 | 1 p.m. ET/ Noon CT/ 11 a.m. MT/ 10 a.m. PT — NCSL will be hosting a webinar, *Surprise Billing and Pharmaceuticals: Two Health Care Cost Factors*. [Register](#) for this webinar and hear from experts and state respondents who will summarize recent health care cost trends and discuss two factors that affect them: prescription drug pricing and surprise billing. These two topics will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent webinars.

For more information on NCSL’s Health and Human Services Standing Committee State-Federal Affairs activities, please visit [our website](#), or email Haley Nicholson, haley.nicholson@ncsl.org or Margaret Wile, margaret.wile@ncsl.org.