



News from Congress:

Sept. 19, 2019—Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) introduced, H.R. 3—[The Lower Drug Costs Now Act](#). The bill contains several proposals to reform prescription drug pricing and negotiation procedures. This includes: allowing the Health and Human Services (HHS) secretary to negotiate prices on as many of the 250 most expensive prescription drugs in Medicare; setting up an International Price Index (IPI) that would create a maximum price for any negotiated drug with an IPI; and requiring any company refusing to participate in a negotiation process or that cannot reach an agreement with HHS to pay a Non-Compliance Fee.

Sept. 19, 2019—To avert a government shutdown, the House passed a short-term continuing resolution [funding the government through Nov. 21](#). The short-term deal funds several health extender programs including: community health centers, Medicaid payments to U.S. territories, Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, the National Health Service Corps, teaching health centers' graduate medical education programs, the Special Diabetes Program and several others.

Sept. 20, 2019— After meeting with health stakeholders and receiving hundreds of comments, the Senate Finance Committee task force assigned to review six health taxes that are going to expire, including the ACA's taxes on medical devices and health insurers, issued a [new report](#) with no agreement on next steps. The health tax provisions reviewed in the report were set to expire from December 2017 to December

2019. Senate Finance Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) is still committed to introducing a bill that can address the short-term tax provisions in the House and Senate.

From the Administration:

August 2019—U.S. Surgeon General Vice Adm. Jerome Adams, announced an advisory on the effectiveness of marijuana use during pregnancy. The advisory stated that no amount of marijuana use during pregnancy or adolescence is known to be safe and that pregnant women and youth need facts and resources to support health decisions. The advisory ended by saying that further research is needed to understand the impacts of marijuana and the component tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) on developing brains. Read the full advisory [here](#).

Aug. 20, 2019— HHS and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) [awarded \\$107 million](#) in Quality Improvement Awards to 1,273 health centers across the U.S., territories, and the District of Columbia. The awards recognize the high-quality care and results provided by community health centers.

Aug. 23, 2019—The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a [report](#), "National, Regional, State, and Selected Location Area Vaccination Coverage Among Adolescents Aged 13-17 Years-United States, 2018." A major finding from the report highlighted the low rates of vaccination among rural adolescents.

Aug. 21, 2019—The Administration of Children and Families (ACF) and the Office of Child Support Enforcement released model procedures that could be used for domestic violence cases. Read the full release [here](#).

Aug. 26, 2019—The Drug Enforcement Administration announced it will issue regulations expanding the quantity and variety of [marijuana that is permitted for officially](#) sanctioned scientific and medical research. After a final rule, the agency will review 33 grower applications. The only facility currently allowed to do research is at the University of Mississippi that grows and distributes marijuana for research.

Aug. 30, 2019—ACF released a [report](#) that examines the characteristics and financial circumstances of Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients from 2018.

September 2019—The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid's Office of Minority Health and the Substance Abuse and Mental Services Administration released an [updated guide](#) on, "A Roadmap to Behavioral Health: A Guide to Using Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services."

September 2019—The U.S. Government Accountability Office issues a [report](#) on, "Patient Options for Safe and Effective Disposal of Unused Opioids."

September 2019—The U.S. Surgeon General released an [advisory](#) on, "The E-cigarette Epidemic Among Youth."

Sept. 6, 2019—The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [issued a report to provide consumer information](#) on the potential risks associated with vaping of THC, the psychoactive component in cannabis.

Sept. 8-14, 2019—National Suicide Prevention Week was Sept. 8-14. A number of HHS agencies including [HRSA have resources](#) and programs the public can access at any time, including [Suicide Safe](#), a suicide prevention app available from The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The app can assist health care

providers integrate suicide prevention strategies into their practice. The app also includes patient and provider educational materials, a treatment locator and conversation starters among other resources.

Sept. 11, 2019—President Donald Trump announced that his administration would combat the epidemic of youth e-cigarette use with a plan to remove non-tobacco flavored e-cigarette products. Read the full press release [here](#).

Sept. 13, 2019—The Department of Transportation (DOT) has created an Air Ambulance Billing Task Force. Congress has been asking the agency to create the task force since the passage of the 2018 Federal Aviation Association Act.. [The Air Ambulance and Patient Billing Advisory](#) Committee will have 13 members, hold regular meetings and make recommendations to DOT Secretary Elaine Chao, with the secretary submitting a report to relevant congressional committees within 180 days of receiving recommendations.

Sept. 19, 2019—FDA [announced](#) that they are investigating, in partnership with state and local health departments, a multistate outbreak of lung injuries associated with e-cigarette products.

From the Courts:

August 2019—Johnson & Johnson was ordered to pay Oklahoma state \$572 million as part of a lawsuit against the company. In the lawsuit, in an Oklahoma district court, the state claimed that Johnson & Johnson had helped fuel the opioid crisis by deceptively marketing the drug. The state initially sued for \$17 billion to cover what they calculated as the costs to treat and repair the damage done by the opioid crisis over the next 20 years. Read [here](#) for more information about the lawsuit and settlement.

Sept. 4, 2019—A federal judge in Washington D.C. has written an [official approval](#) of CVS Health's acquisition of health insurance company Aetna. CVS has been already operating as if [the merger was done](#) and the final approval puts any

outstanding concerns to rest regarding anti-competitive behavior.

Funding Announcements:

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

August 2019—HRSA released three [Notices of Funding Opportunity](#) for the new fiscal year 2020, with start dates of March 1, 2020. Part of the funding will be for up to 47 awards that will help reduce new HIV Infections in the U.S. to less than 3,000 per year by 2030.

September—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.

Sept. 4, 2019—HHS announced \$1.8 billion of funding that will go to states to combat the opioid crisis. Read the full release [here](#).

Sept. 6, 2019—The Administration of Community Living announced the award recipients for Support Innovations in Nutrition Programs and Services. A full list of the recipients in states across the country can be found [here](#).

Spotlight On:

Sept. 16, 2019—NCSL released a new blog, "[Paying the Price: Strategies to Control Health Care Costs](#)".

September 2019—NCSL recently released a "Child Support and Employment" [brief](#) that looks at state innovations to leverage TANF and child support incentive dollars to provide employment services to noncustodial parents engaged in the child support program.

September 2019—NCSL Children and Families program released a [report](#) that looks at state policy options to address the benefits cliffs, or the steep reduction in public assistance upon potentially a small increase in earnings.

September 2019—Lack of access to behavioral health providers in rural areas continue to affect millions of Americans. State policymakers continue to look for innovative ways to address this workforce shortage. Utilizing addiction counselors to provide services in areas that lack behavioral health providers is one strategy states are increasingly examining. NCSL's [Scope of Practice Policy](#) website has new information about how addiction counselors are credentialed in the states and policymakers can compare their states' requirements to neighboring states.

September 2019—September is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Read [NCSL's recent health blog](#) on what states and federal partners are doing and can do in the future to help prevent, treat and educate about childhood cancer.

September 2019—[September is National Recovery Month](#) and is sponsored by SAMHSA. The month helps to educate Americans about substance use treatment and mental health services.

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.