

Healthcare Policy Work Continues Despite Impeachment Talk

RHC Modernization Act Window of Opportunity Remains

While your cable news channel of choice may be offering near 24/7 coverage of impeachment, Congress and Capitol Hill continue to work on several key pieces of healthcare legislation outside of the limelight. In wonky health policy circles, of which I happen to dabble occasionally, two topics have been taking up a lot of attention: 1) Drug Pricing and 2) Surprise Medical Billing.

A bipartisan package on drug pricing, led by Senator Grassley and Senator Wyden, has emerged out of the Senate Finance Committee and a version of that package may have a good chance to pass by the end of the year. There is also broad consensus that Congress needs to pass something to protect patients from surprise medical billing. The specific solution is still being furiously debated in Congress and there are several proposals floating around. One solution is supported by the insurance companies, while other solutions are supported by provider groups. These competing interests have set up PACs and are blanketing the airwaves with commercials (at least in Washington DC) advocating for their preferred solution.



While, it is unclear if a consensus strong enough to pass through a divided Congress will emerge on either of these issues, it seems more likely than not that Congress will do *something* on these issues. If partisan gridlock appeared to strong to overcome, then neither the insurance companies nor the provider groups would be spending so much on advertising.

All of which brings me to my central message: **our best window of opportunity to pass the RHC Modernization Act is in the next 3 to 5 months.** When Congress finally does move on either drug pricing or surprise medical billing, there will be an opportunity to include rural health provisions (and rural health clinic provisions) in that broader package. I can't predict exactly what the legislative vehicle will look like, just that there will be a legislative vehicle in the coming months to carry the RHC Modernization Act. This is our best window of opportunity before Congress shuts down most policymaking to focus on the 2020 elections.

We continue to get additional cosponsors for H.R. 2788 and S. 1037 but we still need more. Please visit https://www.web.narhc.org/narhc/RHC_Modernization_Act_Advocacy.asp to see what you can do to advocate for the RHC modernization act. We need to keep the grassroots pressure up if we want to take advantage of this window of opportunity. As always, please feel free to reach out directly to me if you have questions about the RHC Modernization Act itself or questions about how you can best advocate for the legislation.

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