



Health Policy Briefing

January 27, 2025

Trump Administration Wraps Up First Week Back in Office

President Donald Trump officially began his second presidential term last week. Upon taking office on Monday, the President signed an initial slate of more than two dozen executive orders (E.O.s), with fewer pertaining to health care than had been expected. The [Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions](#) rescinds 78 Biden-era executive actions, including E.O.s related to the COVID-19 response, health equity, Medicaid, Affordable Care Act coverage, prescription drug costs, and artificial intelligence. President Trump's [Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to The Federal Government](#) E.O. declares that there are only two biological sexes, male and female, and will prevent taxpayer funding from being used for gender-transition health care. In addition to signing an [E.O.](#) reaffirming the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal money for abortion, the Trump administration also issued a [memo](#) reviving the so-called Mexico City Policy. Under this policy, international nonprofit organizations that receive U.S. federal funding must certify that they do not provide or promote abortion services or counseling.

President Trump also signed an [order](#) to start the process of withdrawing the U.S. from the World Health Organization (WHO). Under the terms of the United States' WHO membership, withdrawal must be preceded by a one-year notice period along with continued payment of U.S. financial obligations. Former President Joe Biden previously reversed the first Trump administration's decision to withdraw from WHO before the notice period expired. President Trump has criticized the global health body for its failure to contain COVID-19 and its deference to China during the pandemic. The U.S. is one of the largest funding sources for the international aid and disease response group, contributing approximately 19% of WHO's total revenue. As a result of the order, WHO is freezing hiring, suspending investments, and halting non-essential travel. The E.O. will also have widespread implications for how the U.S. surveils and responds to international disease outbreaks.

Federal websites related to diversity, equity, and inclusion

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(DEI) were taken offline by the new administration last week, and all federal DEI workers were placed on paid leave. The Office of Personnel Management informed federal agencies that it is working to close all agency DEI offices and end related contracts. The Trump administration also took action ordering federal employees to return to in-office work and issuing temporary, government-wide freezes on hiring and regulatory activity. Finally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is under a department-wide pause on all external communications that are not directly related to emergencies or critical to preserving health. The communications directive, which will be in place through February 1, has led to the cancellation of federal advisory committee meetings and public speaking engagements. Restrictions have also been placed on travel and hiring by the National Institutes of Health. According to an HHS spokesperson, exemptions to the freezes can be made on a case-by-case basis for “mission critical” issues.

Trump Administration Personnel Update

Senate-wide votes have begun in the process to confirm President Donald Trump’s executive nominees. The chamber confirmed Marco Rubio as Secretary of State in a 99-0 vote on Monday, John Ratcliffe as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency in a 74-25 vote on Thursday, and Pete Hegseth as Secretary of Defense in a 50-50 vote on Friday (with Vice President JD Vance casting the tie-breaking vote). The Senate remained in session on Saturday in a show of frustration by Republicans over Democrats’ refusal to fast-track confirmation of the President’s nominees, confirming Kristi Noem as Secretary of Homeland Security in a 59-34 vote. Doug Collins’ nomination to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs was advanced by the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee in a near unanimous vote on Thursday. Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) was the only panel member to vote against Collins’ nomination. She expressed concerns about the nominee’s stance on abortion and the potential reversal of a Biden administration policy allowing the Veterans Health Administration to offer abortions in certain circumstances.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) secretary nominee Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s financial disclosure forms were released last week. The forms indicate that Kennedy has stopped his anti-vaccine legal and advocacy work but is still expecting to profit from book publications that raise questions about vaccine efficacy. Kennedy will appear before the Senate Finance Committee for his confirmation hearing on Wednesday, and before the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee for a courtesy hearing on Thursday. The Finance Committee will ultimately vote on whether Kennedy’s nomination is advanced to the Senate floor. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), who sits on the Finance Committee, sent a [letter](#) to the HHS nominee last week requesting he answer a list of 175 questions ahead of his confirmation hearing. Warren expresses concern about Kennedy’s “dangerous views on vaccine safety and public health,” including “baseless opposition to vaccines” and “inconsistent statements in important policy areas like reproductive rights access.”

The White House also began choosing acting leadership to head federal agencies while confirmation proceedings take place in the Senate. Health officials recently tapped by the Trump administration to serve as acting agency heads include:

- Dorothy Fink, M.D. as Acting HHS Secretary; Dr. Fink is the Director of the HHS Office on Women’s Health.
- Sara Brenner, M.D., M.P.H. as Acting Commissioner of Food and Drugs; Dr. Brenner is a career official at the Food and Drug Administration who most recently served as the Chief Medical Officer for In Vitro Diagnostics and Associate Director for Medical Affairs in the Center for Devices and Radiological Health.
- Susan Monarez, Ph.D. as Acting Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Dr. Monarez is the Deputy Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health.
- Dr. Matthew Memoli, M.D., M.S. as Acting Director of the National Institutes of Health; Dr. Memoli is a researcher at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Lawmakers Continue Talks on Bipartisan Health Package Revival

Leadership of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health met last week to reaffirm their support for passage of a bipartisan health care package this year. While Chair Buddy Carter, BSPHarm (R-Ga.) and Ranking Member Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) have not settled on a vehicle for the health care package that was dropped from the continuing resolution passed by Congress in December, they both expressed optimism about successfully moving a package. Congressional Republicans are awaiting input from the administration regarding the Medicare sequester that would have helped offset the bipartisan health deal. Lawmakers have expressed concern about the meaning of remarks by President Donald Trump about not touching Social Security or Medicare. While the sequester provision would not impact Medicare benefits, the lawmakers have requested guidance from the White House about how to proceed.

House Passes ‘Born-Alive’ Abortion Bill

The House of Representatives passed the *Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act* (H.R. 21) on Thursday. The legislation, which would penalize health care providers that fail to aid an infant who survives an attempted abortion, was passed largely along party-lines in a 217-204 vote. Companion legislation (S. 6) was blocked by Senate Democrats earlier in the week in a 52-47 procedural motion vote that required 60 votes to advance. Democrats have criticized the legislation as an attempt to intimidate health care providers and attack reproductive health, while Republicans assert that the bill is a simple and common-sense measure.

Warren Recommends Policies for DOGE Consideration

Amongst the many executive actions taken by President Donald Trump during his first week in office was an [executive order](#) (E.O.) officially establishing the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to modernize federal technology and software and maximize governmental efficiency and productivity. In response to the DOGE E.O., Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) sent a [letter](#) to Elon Musk, tech billionaire and DOGE Chair, with 30 ideas for cutting government spending. Warren expresses concern about DOGE proposals released to date, including cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, and veterans’ benefits, and offers alternative recommendations. Recommendations included in the 21-page letter include curbing taxpayer abuse by Medicare Advantage insurers, engaging in additional Medicare price negotiations, supporting efforts to “crack down” on pharmacy benefit managers, addressing patent abuses by the pharmaceutical industry, exercising Bayh-Dole march-in rights and government patent use power to lower drug prices, breaking up health care conglomerates, and keeping private equity out of the health care industry.

Warren, Wyden, Sanders Press White House to Continue Drug Price Negotiations

Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) sent a [letter](#) to the White House last week urging the Trump administration to not pause the Medicare drug price negotiation program established by the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022. “There is no legal basis for any pause, and allowing giant pharmaceutical companies to pressure you into one would dramatically increase costs for over 60 million Medicare beneficiaries and betray your own campaign promises,” the senators argue. The lawmakers cite reports that pharmaceutical manufacturers plan to ask the new administration to pause drug price negotiations soon after taking office. The letter asks that the President “defend the law aggressively in court and use your power to negotiate the price of these drugs to negotiate the best deal possible for seniors.”

Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing "Protecting Veteran Choice: Examining VA's Community Care Program;" 10:30 a.m.; January 28

Senate Finance Committee hearing to examine the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services; 10:00 a.m.; January 29

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing to examine the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. to serve Secretary of Health and Human Services; 10:00 a.m.; January 30

Recently Introduced Health Legislation

S.165 — A bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to list fentanyl-related substances as schedule I controlled substances; Sponsor: Johnson, Ron [Sen.-R-WI]; Committees: Senate – Judiciary

H.R.577 — To direct the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to establish a demonstration program to refer qualified participants within the Continuum of Care Program to Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics for certain treatment, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Calvert, Ken [Rep.-R-CA-41]; Committees: House - Financial Services

H.R.584 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to prohibit States from making medical assistance available to certain individuals under the Medicaid program; Sponsor: Kiley, Kevin [Rep.-R-CA-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.586 — To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to study and report on the prevalence of cholangiocarcinoma in veterans who served in the Vietnam theater of operations during the Vietnam era, and for other purposes; Sponsor: LaLota, Nick [Rep.-R-NY-1]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.593 — To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude certain health professions education scholarship and loan payments from gross income; Sponsor: Tokuda, Jill N. [Rep.-D-HI-2]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

S.178 — A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act and the Public Health Service Act to improve the reporting of abortion data to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Ernst, Joni [Sen.-R-IA]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.183 — A bill to authorize major medical facility projects for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2025, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Moran, Jerry [Sen.-R-KS]; Committees: Senate - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.600 — To prohibit the use of funds to seek membership in the World Health Organization or to provide assessed or voluntary contributions to the World Health Organization; Sponsor: Arrington, Jodey C. [Rep.-R-TX-19]; Committees: House - Foreign Affairs

H.R.602 — To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that sexual assault nurse examiners are employed at certain Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Burchett, Tim [Rep.-R-TN-2]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.608 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide for a demonstration project under the Medicaid program for political subdivisions of States to provide medical assistance for the expansion population under such program, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Doggett, Lloyd [Rep.-D-TX-37]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.609 — To amend the Social Security Act and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to include net investment income tax imposed in the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund and to modify the net investment income tax; Sponsor: Doggett,

Lloyd [Rep.-D-TX-37]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

H.R.610 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for certain reforms with respect to Medicare supplemental health insurance policies; Sponsor: Doggett, Lloyd [Rep.-D-TX-37]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.612 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize grants to health care providers to enhance the physical and cyber security of their facilities, personnel, and patients; Sponsor: Escobar, Veronica [Rep.-D-TX-16]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.627 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act and Public Health Service Act to improve the reporting of abortion data to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Norman, Ralph [Rep.-R-SC-5]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.628 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to eliminate consideration of the income of organ recipients in providing reimbursement of expenses to donating individuals, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Obernolte, Jay [Rep.-R-CA-23]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.629 — To amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit chemical abortions, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Ogles, Andrew [Rep.-R-TN-5]; Committees: House - Judiciary

H.R.639 — To prohibit group health plans, health insurance issuers, and Federal health care programs from applying prior authorization requirements, utilization management techniques, and medical necessity reviews; Sponsor: Van Drew, Jefferson [Rep.-R-NJ-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Oversight and Government Reform

S.Res.32 — A resolution designating January 23, 2025, as “Maternal Health Awareness Day”; Sponsor: Booker, Cory A. [Sen.-D-NJ]; Committees: Senate - Judiciary

S.201 — A bill to provide for a study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine on the prevalence and mortality of cancer among individuals who served as active duty aircrew in the Armed Forces, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Kelly, Mark [Sen.-D-AZ]; Committees: Senate - Veterans’ Affairs

S.208 — A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the Stop, Observe, Ask, and Respond to Health and Wellness Training Program; Sponsor: Schmitt, Eric [Sen.-R-MO]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.209 — A bill to protect children from medical malpractice in the form of gender-transition procedures; Sponsor: Cotton, Tom [Sen.-R-AR]; Committees: Senate - Judiciary

S.219 — A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to improve the ability of veterans to access medical care in medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs and in the community by providing veterans the ability to choose health care providers; Sponsor: Blackburn, Marsha [Sen.-R-TN]; Committees: Senate - Veterans’ Affairs

S.229 — A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to require that direct-to-consumer advertisements for prescription drugs and biological products include an appropriate disclosure of pricing information; Sponsor: Durbin, Richard J. [Sen.-D-IL]; Committees: Senate - Finance

S.237 — A bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to provide public safety officer benefits for exposure-related cancers, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Klobuchar, Amy [Sen.-D-MN]; Committees: Senate - Judiciary

H.R.653 — To protect children from medical malpractice in the form of gender transition procedures; Sponsor: Babin, Brian [Rep.-R-TX-36]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Judiciary; Education and Workforce; Natural Resources; Ways and Means

H.R.657 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the reimbursement of continuing professional education expenses for health care professionals of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Sponsor: Brownley, Julia [Rep.-D-CA-26]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.658 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish qualifications for the appointment of a person as a marriage and family therapist, qualified to provide clinical supervision, in the Veterans Health Administration; Sponsor: Brownley, Julia [Rep.-D-CA-26]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.661 — To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, the Council for Technology and Innovation of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, to carry out a program to facilitate and coordinate efforts between the United States and Israel to expand and enhance collaboration on the development and delivery of health care products and services; Sponsor: Buchanan, Vern [Rep.-R-FL-16]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.668 — To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to coordinate, navigate, and manage care and benefits for veterans enrolled in both the Medicare program and the system of annual patient enrollment of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Sponsor: Ciscomani, Juan [Rep.-R-AZ-6]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.675 — To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response and the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and in coordination with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security, to establish a program of entering into partnerships with eligible domestic manufacturers to ensure the availability of qualified personal protective equipment to prepare for and respond to national health or other emergencies, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Griffith, H. Morgan [Rep.-R-VA-9]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Oversight and Government Reform

H.R.679 — To nullify the modifications made by the Food and Drug Administration in January 2023 to the risk evaluation and mitigation strategy for the abortion pill mifepristone, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Harshbarger, Diana [Rep.-R-TN-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.682 — To amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit abortion in cases where a fetal heartbeat is detectable; Sponsor: Kelly, Mike [Rep.-R-PA-16]; Committees: House - Judiciary

H.R.685 — To amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to prohibit the approval of new abortion drugs, to prohibit investigational use exemptions for abortion drugs, and to impose additional regulatory requirements with respect to previously approved abortion drugs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Latta, Robert E. [Rep.-R-OH-5]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.686 — To amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit the unlawful disposal of fetal remains; Sponsor: Latta, Robert E. [Rep.-R-OH-5]; Committees: House - Judiciary

H.R.688 — To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to furnish tailored information to expecting mothers, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Mace, Nancy [Rep.-R-SC-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce