



KHA's Federal Advocate
Friday, July 7, 2017

This Week in Washington – July 3-7

Congress took a break this week for their 4th of July home-work period, but the Senate's Better Care Reconciliation Act continued to take a beating. More Republican senators came out against the bill, the most recent being Senators John Hoeven (R-ND) and Bob Corker (R-TN). More than 10 Republican senators have voiced active opposition to the current draft—including Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS). Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) can only afford to lose three senators. Some are opposing it because it's too liberal. Some are opposing it for being insufficiently conservative. As Senator McConnell said at a town hall this week in his home state of Kentucky, "I'm a guy with a Rubik's Cube."

It's difficult to see at this point how the BCRA's square can be circled without revamping the bill's entire approach. Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) has been working the phones hard throughout the week to convince senators that his amendment to allow insurance companies the right to sell ACA non-compliant plans as long as they sell ACA compliant plans would thread the needle. And while this may address the ongoing Republican concern of bringing down average premium costs (while creating other major marketplace problems like those commonly associated with improperly funded high-risk corridor programs), they fail to address the bill's Medicaid funding cliff or the lack of access to opioid addiction treatment programs.

In light of these problems, GOP Senate leadership has pushed a vote back another week, now aiming for the week of July 17. But even this looks ambitious considering where things stand currently. Indeed, Senator McConnell went so far as to say that, "If my side is unable to agree on an adequate replacement, then some kind of action with regard to the private health insurance market must occur," thus opening the door to a bipartisan negotiation. One of the leading moderate voices in the Senate, Susan Collins (R-ME), said that the BCRA would need to be "completely overhauled" in order to get her vote, and ameliorating her would completely alienate conservatives who are already getting antsy over talk that the bill will be stripped of a repeal of the net investment tax (a 3.8% tax on investment income over \$250,000 that nets the ACA \$172.2 billion over 10 years). It may be that a bipartisan solution is the only plausible one, and even center-right Wall Street Journal editorialist Peggy Noonan wrote this week about this reality.

KHA will continue to engage with our senators to make sure that they understand why we are opposing the BCRA and how they can work to improve the bill. Indeed, Senator Moran, at a town hall this week in Palco, ticked off a list of his concerns with the BCRA and they included many of ours. Senator Moran was one of only three Republican senators to hold a town hall this week, and we commend him for this.

As the July session of Congress commences Monday, July 10, we will stay vigilant and provide you with updates as things change.

Attend the AHA Rural Advocacy Event

The American Hospital Association is hosting their Second Annual Rural Hospital Policy Forum, July 19-20, in Washington, DC. This event is an opportunity to advocate for critical rural hospital programs such as the Medicare Dependent Hospital, enhanced low-volume adjustment, ambulance add-on programs and those issues affecting Critical Access Hospitals. AHA will have interactive discussions with leading policy makers from Capitol Hill including Sens. Grassley and Heitkamp, HRSA Administrator Dr. Sigounas and Associate Administrator Tom Morris on the future of rural health care. AHA Executive Vice President Tom Nickels will moderate a congressional staff panel and provide an update on AHA Advocacy priorities. For additional information, please visit the [AHA Advocacy Action Center](#). [Registration](#) is required. In conjunction with this event, the Kansas Hospital Association will be coordinating Hill visits to the Kansas Congressional offices. Please contact [Chad Austin](#) at (785) 233-7436 for additional information.

--*Chad Austin*