



KHA's Federal Advocate

Jan. 25, 2024

Congress Extends Funding Deadlines

Appropriations work continues to dominate the agenda in Congress. The final showdown over the fiscal year 2024 budget has been pushed back, likely until early March. When Congress assembled earlier this month, it was clear they would need more time to reach consensus on how to move forward. Late last week, they agreed to move the Jan.19 and Feb. 2 funding deadlines back to Mar. 1 and Mar. 8, respectively. Importantly, they also reached a further agreement on the top-line spending levels of these bills. Now, appropriators are racing to allocate the agreed-to amounts of \$886 billion for defense spending and \$772 billion in non-defense spending to specific budget lines in preparation for final budget bills.

This may be the last chance for Congress to negotiate FY 2024 bills, as the need to draft FY 2025 bills must begin in earnest soon. The Kansas Hospital Association has been working with the Kansas congressional delegation on our main priorities of seeing the Medicare-Dependent Hospital and Low-Volume Hospital programs reauthorized, and the scheduled cuts to the Affordable Care Act Disproportionate Share Hospital from going into effect. These have been part of every agreement so far. Importantly, the programs have been kept separate from any attempts to fund them with Medicare site-neutral payment cuts. KHA will continue to promote these priorities during February as the process moves forward.

One of KHA's federal priorities is to work toward legislative and regulatory solutions addressing hospitals' workforce problems, particularly related to nursing shortages. We continue to promote H.R.6205/S.2311, the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act, a bill allocating unused visas in a calendar year to foreign nurse applicants. We thank Rep. Jake LaTurner for cosponsoring this bill. We will continue to encourage our other delegation members to follow suit. On the regulatory side, we continue to work with Sen. Jerry Moran's office to convince the Department of Homeland Security to recognize nursing degrees as science, technology, engineering and math degrees, thus allowing nursing students with bachelor's degrees to stay in the country and retain work authorizations while transitioning from student to work visas. Finally, we recently wrote a [letter](#) to CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure to encourage The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to loosen burdensome requirements for certified nurse assistant instructors.

Next month, several Kansas hospital representatives will travel to Washington, D.C. to participate in the National Rural Health Association's annual policy institute. As part of this, KHA is coordinating Hill visits for the group, and we will talk with our delegation's House members and Senate staff regarding these and other issues affecting the delivery of quality health care in rural Kansas. The Senate will not be in session the week of the institute.