



KHA's Federal Advocate

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The U.S. Government Begins to Take Shape for 2025

Congress is in recess for a week, and while the 2024 legislative endgame is not completely obvious, it is beginning to take shape. During the past couple of weeks, President-Elect Donald Trump named his top health care policy leadership team by nominating Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. to be his Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Dr. Mehmet Oz to lead the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and Marty Makary to head the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Providing a full fiscal year 2025 budget for the United States government will fall to the incoming 119th Congress. House and Senate negotiators are having great difficulty finding common ground on top-line spending caps. Because of this, appropriators on both sides have been unable to move forward with meaningful work on their spending bills. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) is adamantly insisting on delaying work. His best path to retaining his gavel in the 119th Congress is to not pass an omnibus spending bill. The omnibus bill would be relying on Democratic votes over the opposition by members of his party. A continuing resolution that extends the FY 2025 budget deadline to sometime in late February or early March will need to pass Congress before the current deadline on Dec. 20. Considering this, health care extenders, including the Medicare Dependent Hospital extension, the Low-Volume Hospital extension, the non-expansion Disproportionate Share Hospital funding extension and the telehealth extension, are likely to be included in the must pass FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

President-Elect Trump's announcements of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Dr. Mehmet Oz and Marty Makary to lead HHS, CMS, and the FDA, respectively, have set off a furious debate about what public health policy will look like throughout the next four years. Hospitals have not historically been central to these newly nominated policymakers' frustrations. Drugmakers, vaccine developers, food processors and, of course, the regulatory agencies they will now head have taken the most heat from them over the years. Hospitals, however, being the health care providers of last resort, may be required to safeguard a rise in illnesses now prevented by high vaccination rates if such rates were to fall. Many other second order effects of the "Make America Healthy Again" movement are difficult to predict.

Dr. Oz, however, has been a staunch supporter of Medicare Advantage plans, and his nomination to head CMS brings his support into stark relief. It is unknown how much of this support was ideological versus commercial as MA plans are paid sponsors of his television program, but [this segment](#) from two months ago paints a picture of his position.

Thankfully, we have a great advocate for placing limits on MA plans in Senator Roger Marshall (R-KS), the primary sponsor of the Seniors Timely Access to Care Act. He sits on the Senate panel that will review Dr. Oz's nomination, and we will work with him and others to ensure that too-good-to-be-true promises regarding Medicare Advantage plans do not become the norm in the upcoming administration.