

Federal Health Update

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EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL NEWS

- **The Senate released its draft of a bill to replace the ACA on June 22, 2017.** The Congressional Budget Office is expected to score the bill by early next week. To read the text of the bill, visit <https://www.budget.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/SENATEHEALTHCARE.pdf>.

The *Washington Post* offers a detailed comparison between the ACA, the proposed House bill and the proposed Senate bill:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/politics/obamacare-senate-bill-compare/?utm_term=.1e277372d3c2

MILITARY HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **The Defense Health Agency (DHA) will take over responsibility of the Department of Defense (DoD) HIV/AIDS Prevention Program's (DHAPP) from Navy Medicine.**

Established in 2001, DHAPP helps contain the global health threat posed by the HIV pandemic. DHAPP's mission was, and still is, to assist foreign militaries develop HIV control programs in support of global health security and DoD security cooperation efforts.

Since DHAPP's founding, the Navy, through Navy Medicine and NHRC, has served as executive

agent (EA) for the organization. NHRC was selected to manage DHAPP, which is a directorate of the research center, due to the command's expertise in HIV research and development of effective prevention and intervention programs for the U.S. military.

In 2014, one year after the DHA was established, the DoD approved the realignment of all medical EA organizations under DHA's leadership. DHA oversight will streamline interagency collaboration for DHAPP and enhance the DHA's global health engagement capabilities and mission.

VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWS

- **The Department of Veterans Affairs announced a plan to dispose of all vacant VA buildings in 24 months (either by demolishing or setting for reuse).**

VA Secretary Shulkin raised the vacant building issue as a priority in his "State of the VA" address delivered at the White House on May 31.

Nationwide, VA currently has 430 vacant or mostly vacant buildings that are on average more than 60 years old, and cost taxpayers more than \$7 million per year to maintain.

Of the 430 buildings, VA has begun disposal or reuse processes on 71. Of the remaining 359 buildings, the VA will begin disposal or reuse processes on another 71 in the next six months, and plans to initiate disposal of the final 288 vacant buildings within 24 months.

The Secretary also announced that VA would review another 784 non-vacant, but under-utilized, buildings to determine if additional efficiencies could be identified and reinvested in veterans' services.

Finally, in addition to the building closure, Dr. Shulkin announced that the Veterans Benefits Administration is freezing its footprint and will maximize space management by leasing or eliminating office space nationwide. VA estimates these actions will save taxpayers an additional \$15.7 million annually beginning in 2017, for a total of close to \$23 million in combined annual savings from the initiatives.

- **President Trump announced his intent to appoint the following individuals to key positions in his Department of Veterans Affairs:**
 - **Thomas G. Bowman to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.** Bowman is currently majority staff director of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. From 2005 through 2009, he served in several leadership roles in the Department of Veterans Affairs, including acting assistant secretary for the office of public and intergovernmental affairs, deputy chief of staff, and chief of staff. Bowman retired from the Marine Corps as a colonel after 30 years of service. He received his BA in Political Science from the University of Texas, Austin and his JD from Western New England College.
 - **Donald P. Loren to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Operations, Security and Preparedness.** Loren currently works as CEO and president of Old Dominion Strategies, a service disabled veteran small business. He previously as a deputy assistant secretary of defense for homeland security integration. Prior to his civilian government experience, he served 31 years in the United States Navy, retiring as a Rear Admiral. Loren received his BS from the United States Naval Academy.
 - **Peter J. Shelby to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Human Resources and Administration.** Shelby is principal and founder of Transcendent Performance, an HR and talent development consulting practice. Previously, Shelby was a senior vice president with Related Companies in New York City. Prior to his

work in the private sector, Shelby served in several human capital leadership roles in the Intelligence Community. Shelby retired from the Marine Corps as a major after 24 years of enlisted and commissioned officer service. Shelby holds an MBA in Human Resources Management from Northcentral University, and a Master of Arts in Adult Education from George Mason University. He received his BA in English Literature (Summa Cum Laude) from The Citadel. He is a certified Senior Professional in Human Resources, and SHRM Senior Certified Professional.

GENERAL HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a proposed rule that would make changes in the second year of the Quality Payment Program as required by the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA).**

CMS's goal is to simplify the program, especially for small, independent, and rural practices, while ensuring fiscal sustainability and high-quality care within Medicare.

The Quality Payment Program, updated annually as part of MACRA, is designed to promote greater value within the healthcare system. Clinicians who participate in Medicare serve more than 57 million seniors. Clinicians can choose how they want to participate in the Quality Payment Program based on their practice size, specialty, location, or patient population.

The proposed rule would amend some existing requirements. It contains new policies for doctors and clinicians participating in the Quality Payment Program that would encourage participation in either [Advanced Alternative Payment Models](#) (APMs) or the [Merit-based Incentive Payment System](#) (MIPS). Additionally, CMS has used clinician feedback to shape the second year of the program. If finalized, the proposed rule would further advance the agency's goals of regulatory relief, program simplification, and state and local flexibility in the creation of innovative approaches to healthcare delivery.

Moreover, CMS is making it easier for rural and small providers to participate.

For a fact sheet on the proposed rule, please visit: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/Value-Based-Programs/MACRA-MIPS-and-APMs/Proposed-rule-fact-sheet.pdf>

The proposed rule (CMS-5522-P) can be downloaded from the *Federal Register* at: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2017-13010.pdf>

For more information about the Quality Payment Program, please visit: gpp.cms

REPORTS/POLICIES

- **The GAO published “Veterans Affairs: Improved Management Processes Are Necessary for IT Systems That Better Support Health Care,” (GAO-17-384) on June 21, 2017.** In this report, the GAO examines the extent to which VA's IT management processes are consistent with leading practices; and current IT systems support VHA's core business functions. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/690/685367.pdf>

HILL HEARINGS

- The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense will hold a hearing on **June 26, 2017**, to mark up the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2018.
- The Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel will hold a hearing on **June 27, 2017**, to markup relevant provisions within the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2018.

- The Senate Armed Services Committee will hold a closed hearing on **June 28-29, 2017**, to markup the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2018.

LEGISLATION

- **H.R.2985** (introduced June 21, 2017): To amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to restrict Members of Congress who represent a state with an essential health benefits (EHB) waiver, approved under the amendments made by the American Health Care Act of 2017, to the lowest actuarial value health insurance coverage that is available under the waiver was referred to the Committee on House Administration, and to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. Sponsor: Representative Sean Patrick Maloney [D-NY-18]
- **H.R.2984** (introduced June 21, 2017): To amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to restrict Members of Congress who represent a state with a waiver approved under the amendments made by the American Health Care Act of 2017 to the same health insurance coverage as is available under such waiver to their constituents was referred to the Committee on House Administration, and to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. Sponsor: Representative Sean Patrick Maloney [D-NY-18]
- **H.R.2986** (introduced June 21, 2017): To amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to restrict Members of Congress who represent a state with a premium age band waiver, approved under the amendments made by the American Health Care Act of 2017, to the highest age band premium for health insurance coverage that is available under the waiver was referred to the Committee on House Administration, and to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. Sponsor: Representative Sean Patrick Maloney [D-NY-18]:
- **H.R.2999** (introduced June 22, 2017): To amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to limit co-payment, coinsurance, or other cost-sharing requirements applicable to prescription drugs in a specialty drug tier to the dollar amount (or its equivalent) of such requirements applicable to prescription drugs in a non-preferred brand drug tier, and for other purposes was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Sponsor: Representative David B. McKinley [R-WV-1]
- **H.R.2972** (introduced June 21, 2017): To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize grants for training and support services for Alzheimer's patients and their families was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Sponsor: Representative Maxine Waters [D-CA-43]
- **H.R.2938** (introduced June 21, 2017): To amend titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act to remove barriers to access to residential substance use disorder treatment services under Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Sponsor: Representative Brian K. Fitzpatrick [R-PA-8]:
- **H.R.2953** (introduced June 21, 2017): To amend the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 respecting the scoring of preventive health savings was referred to the House Committee on the Budget. Sponsor: Representative Michael C. Burgess [R-TX-26]
- **H.R.2957** (introduced June 20, 2017): To amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to provide for enhanced payments to rural health care providers under the Medicare and Medicaid programs, and for other purposes was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Committees on Ways and Means, and the Budget Committee. Sponsor: Representative Sam Graves [R-MO-6]

MEETINGS

- The AUSA 2017 Annual Meeting & Exposition will be held **Oct. 9-11, 2017**, in Washington DC. <http://ausameetings.org/2017annualmeeting/>
- The 2017 AMSUS Annual Continuing Education Meeting will be held on **Nov. 27- Dec. 1, 2017**, at the Gaylord National Harbor, Md. <http://www.amsus.org/annual-meeting/>

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