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##### **President Trump Gives First State of the Union Address**

On Tuesday, President Trump gave his first State of the Union address to Congress with a speech focusing largely on the economy, trade, immigration, and infrastructure, but sharing much less regarding the Administration's health care agenda. The President noted the GOP's repeal of the individual mandate as one of the legislative accomplishments over the last year, and reiterated the need to address the opioid crisis. He also indicated that his Administration will be placing the issue of high drug prices at the top of his priority list, and will be pushing for the expansion of "right-to-try" laws for experimental medications. However, beyond these statements, few details were provided as to how the Administration will address these priorities throughout 2018.

##### **Latest on Government Funding Deal**

With the short-term government funding deal set to expire next week on Thursday, February 8, Congress appears no closer to a long-term funding deal, nor any closer to resolving the issues that led to the brief government shutdown on January 22. Republican members of Congress left DC for their policy retreat on Wednesday and Democrat members are scheduled to leave for their retreat next week, leaving little time for legislative work and significant negotiation to occur. Given the rapidly approaching deadline, speculation is that Congress will vote early next week with little fanfare on another short term "continuing resolution" (CR) that will fund the government until March 22 or 23. It remains unclear whether this funding deal will include any agreement on busting the budget caps or the long-awaited Medicare Extenders package that ACEP continues advocating for, or if this agreement will instead be a "clean" CR with no additional riders attached.

##### **FDA Considers Public Input on Opioid Strategies**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s Opioid Policy Steering Committee met on Tuesday to discuss potential new strategies and mandates to address the nation's opioid epidemic. Discussions included considering changes to opioid "dispensing and packaging" to encourage proper prescribing practices, whether mandatory education should be required for

opioid-prescribing clinicians, whether to specify dose limits, the creation of a nationwide prescription history database, and the impact of state prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMP). Patient advocates also weighed in with some urging the FDA to "stand down" from additional regulations on opioids, noting that more regulation is going to drive patients to heroin and/or other illegal street drugs. Other advocates called on the FDA to remove highest dose opioids from the market and delay any new approvals immediately. The FDA will consider testimony from the meeting as well as public comments over the coming months before issuing any changes.

### **CDC Director Resigns Over Conflicts of Interest**

On Wednesday, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Brenda Fitzgerald announced her resignation in the wake of reports she had traded tobacco stocks while at the helm of the agency charged with public health. Fitzgerald had already been subject to scrutiny due to other conflicts of interest regarding investments in beer companies, pharmaceutical companies, and health insurance companies, and her recusal from some of the CDC's priorities, including smoking cessation programs, cancer detection, and efforts to address the opioid epidemic, brought unwanted criticism against the agency. In the interim, CDC's principal deputy director Anne Schuchat will serve as acting director.

### **Debt Limit Deadline Moves Up**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) announced this week that Congress will be required to raise the nation's debt limit several weeks sooner than expected, adding another complicating variable into ongoing congressional negotiations. Because of reduced revenues from the GOP's tax bill, the Treasury will exhaust its "extraordinary measures" in early March instead of April as originally anticipated. Should Congress fail to raise the debt limit, the federal government would default on its obligations and be unable to pay its bills. This projection comes at a time when Congress is still negotiating federal spending levels and as the Treasury is anticipating a flood of tax refunds that will be issued in February and March.

### **Registration Now Open**

#### **2018 Leadership & Advocacy Conference (LAC18), May 20-23**

The conference will celebrate emergency medicine's accomplishments and continue to work for a better political environment for our specialty and our patients. First-timers will receive special training on how to meet and educate your Members of Congress while seasoned participants will build upon valuable Congressional connections.

Our goal at this Conference is to highlight and advocate for legislation advancing emergency care, regardless of party labels.

Experts on health care policy and political and grassroots advocacy will lead our discussions. We'll tackle problems facing our specialty, develop tools to advocate at all levels, and build relationships with your Members of Congress and their staff.

To register or for more information, [click here](#).

View our gallery of photos from the LAC17 [here](#).



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