



## **ACEP 911 Network Weekly Update July 28, 2017**

The House is in recess through Labor Day. The Senate will reconvene on Monday.

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### **Senate Fails to Advance Health Care Reform Legislation**

After a tumultuous week, Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and John McCain (R-AZ) joined all Democrats early this morning to defeat a so-called “skinny repeal” bill, effectively ending (at least for now) Republican efforts to repeal or even significantly modify the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

The saga began on Tuesday when Sen. McCain flew back from Arizona despite still recovering from surgery and his recent brain cancer diagnosis. Senate Republicans had to overcome a procedural motion to even begin consideration of their health care reform proposals. Since Sens. Collins and Murkowski were opposed to this motion to proceed, Sen. McCain’s support was required just to reach the 50-vote threshold allowing Vice President Mike Pence to cast the tie-breaking vote.

Later that evening, the Senate failed to garner enough support for the “Better Care Reconciliation Act” (BCRA) that Republicans had been developing for the past couple of months, because due to scoring issues it would have required 60 votes, not just a simple majority. The vote on the point of order failed 43 to 57.

On Wednesday, Republicans put forward an amendment that would repeal large portions of the ACA with a two-year delayed implementation. This “repeal and delay” proposal was the same as a bill Republicans approved that made it all the way to the White House before President Obama vetoed it. This amendment failed by a vote of 45 to 55.

These two amendments represented the primary and secondary options sought by Republican leadership. After they both failed, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and his team began working on a third option with their Republican colleagues. What came from these discussions was the idea to pass the simplest bill so the Senate could approve something (even a shell), allowing them to make further changes in a House-Senate conference. This bill – the skinny repeal – would have ended the individual mandate, eliminated the employer mandate for eight years, provided states with additional flexibility (through waivers) to roll

back certain ACA insurance regulations (such as the Essential Health Benefits), defunded Planned Parenthood for one year, and eliminated the ACA's Prevention and Public Health Fund.

The dramatic 49-51 vote on this skinny repeal bill occurred around 1:30 this morning, after almost an hour of Republican leadership and White House pleas for Sen. McCain to vote yes. Following the defeat, McConnell stated, "it's time to move on" to other business before the Senate and that he would now be open to working with Democrats on legislation to stabilize the insurance market and make other fixes.

We would like to thank all of you who responded to our Action Alerts over the past couple of weeks as we worked to protect coverage of, and access to, emergency medical care. We will continue to work with Republicans and Democrats in both the House and Senate to address flaws in the current system.

To review ACEP's Emergency Medicine Health Care Reform Principles, click [here](#). To read today's press statement on the future of health care legislation, click [here](#).

### **House Committee Advances Trauma Bill**

On Thursday morning, the House Energy and Commerce Committee approved an amended version of the ACEP-supported MISSION ZERO bill (H.R. 880) by voice vote. The legislation would create grants to facilitate the delivery of care by military trauma teams at civilian trauma centers. Unfortunately, the modified bill lowers the originally requested authorization levels for the Military Trauma Team Placement Program from \$20 million to \$10 million and the Military Trauma Care Provider Placement Program from \$20 million to \$5 million. Under House rules, funding offsets must be included with any newly authorized program and this led to the decision to reduce the grant limits. The committee vote clears the way for a vote by the full House of Representatives.

ACEP and other members of the ad hoc coalition supporting this bill will be advocating for a return to the full funding limit when the bill is considered by the Senate.

### **House Approves First Bundle of FY 18 Appropriations**

Also on Thursday, the full House cleared the \$790 billion fiscal year 2018 Department of Defense Appropriations Act (H.R. 3219) by a vote of 235 to 192. The spending bill, also known as the "Make America Secure Appropriations Act," combined four of the 12 annual appropriations measures (Defense; Military Construction and Veterans Affairs; Energy and Water; and Legislative Branch) into one package. More than \$658 billion of the total funding (about 80 percent) goes directly to DOD. This level of funding exceeds Congress' current spending limits for these programs and would require lawmakers approve a budget deal for FY 18 to achieve the higher allocation, which has proved elusive to date.

The partisan package (only 5 Democrats supported) now heads to the Senate, where it is expected to be substantially modified. Congress has until Sept. 30 to complete action on all

12 spending bills. Otherwise, a “Continuing Resolution” will be needed to keep federal departments and programs operating beyond that date.



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