

McDermottPlus Healthcare Preview

WEEK OF MARCH 23, 2020

ALL EYES ON SUPPLEMENTAL SPENDING BILL NUMBER THREE.

- + **CONGRESS EXPECTS TO REACH A DEAL THIS WEEK.** Over a whirlwind of a weekend, Senate Republicans unveiled a \$1.6 trillion stimulus and support bill, the opening bid in “phase three” of Congress’ response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The bill creates a \$75 billion public health fund for providers, suspends Medicare sequestration through December 31, 2020, and provides for free diagnostic testing and vaccines for COVID-19. The bill also extends funding for a number of healthcare programs (currently set to expire on May 22, 2020), including Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital payments. What began as bipartisan negotiations, however, quickly deteriorated over disagreements regarding federal assistance for corporations and unemployment insurance, resulting in Democrats blocking a procedural vote to advance the bill on Sunday evening. Now, lawmakers are under even more time pressure to reach a deal before the uncertainty causes more economic harm. Though it is not yet clear what form the final deal will take, the Senate is almost certain to pass something this week. Whatever it is will likely be the largest single stimulus bill ever produced by the federal government.
- + **ONCE THEY REACH A DEAL, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?** Whatever the Senate produces is almost certain to pass the House, potentially by unanimous consent. After that, an extended recess is likely given mounting fears that COVID-19 could spread through Congress’ ranks. The news over the weekend that Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) tested positive sent shock waves through the chamber, which makes a habit of gathering groups of septuagenarians in small rooms. Particularly if the final deal addresses the health extenders past May 22, Congress has little reason to return to Washington before the worst of the crisis is over. As of the moment, Congress does not have any mechanism to allow voting remotely. We will see if this creates momentum for a trial of the concept.

THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE

There are no healthcare related hearings in the Senate this week.

THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE

There are no healthcare related hearings in the House this week.

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