



# McDermottPlus Healthcare Preview

WEEK OF DECEMBER 14, 2020

## THE FINAL COUNTDOWN.

**+ COVID-19 YEAR-END PACKAGE EXPECTED THIS WEEK.** Today, it is expected that a bipartisan group of House and Senate lawmakers will release text of legislation that would provide \$908 billion in coronavirus (COVID-19) aid, but in two separate pieces. This proposal is a possible way to move forward with COVID-19 relief. The first piece, totaling \$748 billion, would focus on the non-controversial pieces of the COVID-19 package, including provider relief funding, unemployment benefits and vaccine-related funding. The second piece would be the controversial elements that have slowed negotiations over the last few months: \$160 billion in state and local government funding and liability protections for businesses. These bills could then be attached to the \$1.4 trillion year-end omnibus spending package that has to be passed by Friday, December 18, to avoid a government shutdown.

**+ WILL SURPRISE BILLING BE INCLUDED?** One of the key outstanding questions of the year-end package is whether surprise billing will be included. Late last Friday, a bicameral, bipartisan deal was reached on surprise billing. The bill most closely resembles the proposal introduced by the House Ways and Means Committee last year and uses arbitration to settle payment disputes between providers and plans. Total savings on the surprise billing package is not yet known, but the package did include some (but not all) of the healthcare extenders. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and the White House have signaled support for the legislation, but Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has yet to take a position. Ultimately, there could be a situation in which there will be wins and losses inside the same bill with stakeholders having very little time to fight if the losses seem to outnumber the wins.

**+ COVID-19 VACCINE ADMINISTRATION BEGINS.** Today marks the beginning of COVID-19 public vaccination. Last Friday, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the Pfizer vaccine for emergency use, and this week, the Moderna vaccine is scheduled to be reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP), an expert panel that advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If ACIP endorses Moderna's vaccine, FDA approval and distribution could come shortly thereafter.

### THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE

There are no healthcare related hearings in Senate this week.

### THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE

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

### CONTACT INFO

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