



McDermottPlus Healthcare Preview

WEEK OF MARCH 1, 2021

COVID-19 Relief Moves to the Senate.

HOUSE PASSES COVID-19 RELIEF PACKAGE. Late last week, the House of Representatives passed the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package known as the American Rescue Plan. The bill passed the House with a vote of 219-212, with two Democrats and all Republicans voting against the bill. The legislation would provide public health funding to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic, make policy changes to the Medicaid program, extend unemployment insurance benefits and provide direct \$1,400 stimulus payments to certain Americans. Of note, the House bill also includes a provision to increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour. However, it has been widely reported that the provision does not satisfy the Senate's Byrd Rule, which the legislation must if Senate Democrats are going to pass the bill via reconciliation. Assuming these reports are accurate, it guarantees that the House will have to have another vote on the Senate-passed version without the minimum wage provision. Democrats in the Senate briefly discussed other alternatives to achieve the goal of increasing the minimum wage, such including a tax penalty on employers. However, it remains likely that the provision as included in the House version will not be in the final bill.

EXPECT THE SENATE TO MOVE QUICKLY. Now that the process of further COVID-19 relief has moved into the month of March, we expect Democrats to act fast to get a bill over the finish line. While there may be differences yet to be resolved, the Senate is unlikely to let perfection become the enemy of the good. This morning (March 1), news outlets released draft language of the Senate substitute for the House bill. In addition to removing the minimum wage provision, the Senate language includes two Medicare provisions: 1) Floor on the Medicare area wage index for hospitals in all-urban States; and 2) Secretarial authority to temporarily waive or modify application of certain Medicare requirements with respect to ambulance services furnished during certain emergency periods. Ultimately, the version that passes the Senate will be the version that becomes law. We will be following the process closely as the bill comes together this week.

THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE

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

THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE

House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee

[The Future of Telehealth: How COVID-19 is Changing the Delivery of Virtual Care](#)

Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at 10:30am

CONTACT INFO

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