ML Strategies Health Care Preview

Week of June 25th

This week, we turn our attention to the Senate following House passage of its opioid package known as H.R. 6. The House passed H.R. 6 by an overwhelming vote of 396-14, which could/should set up the Senate for floor consideration in July. The Senate package has been in development for several weeks with separate bills receiving consideration in multiple committees. The bill that is prepared for the Senate floor should also be able to pass the House as well. If the House and Senate need to conference a bill, chances for passage prior to the election drop considerably.

The Senate is taking a closer look at drug prices this week with hearings in the HELP and Finance committees. In Finance, Secretary Azar testifying presents an opportunity for the Administration to push its drug pricing blueprint, although we are patiently waiting for directional suggestions to be turned into concrete actions (e.g., anti-kickback safe harbors). Additionally, this hearing could devolve into questioning the Administration's response to family separation at the border, which Secretary Azar is reportedly spearheading.

ACA PREMIUM NEWS

The state of the Affordable Care Act will play out state-by-state this year. With rate increase notices slowly becoming public, Republicans and Democrats are using the news to attack the other side over who is responsible. The latest state with rates becoming public is Indiana with a 10.2 percent proposed increase from one insurer and a 0.5 percent decrease from another. While the 10.2 will make headlines, it's not as high as they were for plan year 2018.

Senator Donnelly, who is up for reelection this year, said the rate increases are "unnecessarily being driven by the Administration's continued and deliberate efforts to undermine the marketplace." Donnelly latched onto state insurers supporting these claims, with one insurer writing that, "efforts to undermine the ACA have directly driven annual premium increases that have priced the desired healthcare coverage out of reach for many customers." Indiana has until late September to review the rate proposals.

This will play out all across the country but is particularly relevant in states with close Senate races and in states with a number of House seats up for grabs.

THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE

No hearings announced in the House this week.

THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE

On Tuesday (6/26), the Senate Finance Committee will hold a hearing titled, "Prescription Drug Affordability and Innovation: Addressing Challenges in Today's Market." Click here for more information.

On Tuesday (6/26), The Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee will conduct its markup. Click here for more information.

On Wednesday (6/27), the Senate HELP Committee will hold a hearing titled, "How to Reduce Health Care Costs: Understanding the Cost of Health Care in America." Click here for more information.

On Wednesday (6/27), the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee will hold a hearing titled, "Medicaid Fraud and Overpayments: Problems and Solutions." Click here for more information.

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