



### **Congress Approves Short Term CR Without a Payment Patch for Physicians**

Congress avoided a federal government shutdown by passing a continuing resolution (CR) on December 20th that funds federal programs through March 14th. The CR approved by Congress and signed into law by President Biden does not include a physician payment patch, an APM bonus incentive payment or many of the other health care provisions that were in earlier versions of the CR defeated on the House floor. Consequently, the 2.83% Medicare physician payment cut took effect on January 1st. To prepare for the upcoming advocacy efforts for sustainable physician payment in Washington's changing political landscape, the AMA is hosting a "Jumpstart Your Advocacy in 2025" webinar at 8:00 pm ET on Wednesday, January 22. This AMA educational session will explore the fluid Congressional landscape, the effect it will have on health care policy in the new Congress, and how you can be an effective advocate in 2025 and beyond. [Register now to reserve your spot.](#)

### **House and Senate 2025 Schedules Released**

The House and Senate 2025 calendars reflect a busy schedule in the coming year with the House in session 4 days a week and the Senate in session 5 days a week during legislative work periods. Although the House and Senate have somewhat different breaks between legislative periods, both chambers have scheduled the month-long August recess break with the House planning to begin the summer break in the last week of July. The new 119th Congress will be sworn-in on January 3rd. The House 2025 calendar can be viewed [here](#) and the Senate calendar can be viewed [here](#).

### **Prospective Nominees to Lead HHS and CMS**

President-elect Trump's nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. (RFK) as Secretary of HHS and Dr. Mehmet Oz as Administrator of the CMS could mean a sea change for the nation's health care system. Both RFK and CMS nominee Dr. Oz are reportedly interested in reshaping the Medicare coding and billing system and perhaps removing the AMA from setting doctor's fees. Dr. Oz has long supported alternative medicines to treat conditions and may seek changes in how CMS covers dietary supplements and other treatments that are not approved by the FDA. Dr. Oz also supports the use of telehealth and AI in delivering non-life-threatening illness and improving access to care, which suggests he may support efforts to make telehealth flexibilities permanent and shape CMS policies to encourage the adoption and integration of advanced technologies. Dr. Oz is also a strong proponent of Medicare Advantage (MA), opining that traditional Medicare providers make more money when their patients are in poor health and MA plans benefit when their patients have fewer acute conditions and lower levels of chronic disease. Both nominations require Senate confirmation.

### President-Elect Trump Picks Stanford Professor to Lead NIH

Jay Bhattacharya, MD, PhD, has been nominated by President-elect Trump to be the Director of the NIH. Dr. Bhattacharya is a professor of Health Policy at Stanford University and a research associate at the National Bureau of Economics Research. He directs Stanford's Center for Demography and Economics of Health and Aging. Dr. Bhattacharya has publicly stated support for restructuring the NIH to decentralize power and, if confirmed by the Senate, seems likely to work with lawmakers on NIH reforms. More information about Dr. Bhattacharya can be found [here](#).

### New NIH Website on Women's Health Research

The NIH recently launched a new website that serves as a resource on federally funded women's health research across the lifespan and supports the White House Initiative on Women's Health Research. The new NIH website, Discover Women's Health Research (DiscoverWHR), can be found [here](#).

### DOGE Seeks To Slash Spending Across the Federal Government

Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, the co-leaders of the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), seek to slash \$2 trillion in federal spending and reduce regulatory burdens. To achieve these goals, reports indicate they may pursue decreasing the number of federal agencies through consolidation, eliminating fraud and waste, and targeting programs for which the congressional authorization has expired, which in FY 24 includes hundreds of federal programs receiving over \$500 billion in appropriations according to the Congressional Budget Office. The structure of DOGE and how it will function in its advisory capacity to the President will remain uncertain until the Trump Administration takes office. DOGE recommendations to cut spending will require congressional approval and regulatory recommendations must comply with the Administrative Procedure Act governing how regulations are created and enforced.

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American Urogynecologic Society  
9466 Georgia Avenue PMB 2064  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
(301) 273-0570



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