



Weekly Health Care Checkup: *COVID-19 and Beyond* July 6-10, 2020

IN BRIEF

What Happened This Week: Both chambers were out for the July 4 recess this week, though members of the House Appropriations Committee were in town to work on several spending bills for FY 2021 – including [funding](#) for the Department of Health and Human Services (funding to “support State and local public health departments, public health laboratories, and global health activities” was included).

A handful of committees also conducted COVID-19 hearings remotely this week. On Wednesday, the House Homeland Security Committee heard from representatives from Illinois, Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama during a [hearing](#) about how states are responding to the pandemic. The following day, a House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee [examined](#) the increased risks that consumers are facing during the pandemic (from price gouging to unsafe treatments to household dangers). And later today (Friday, July 10), the House Homeland Security Committee is expected to hold another [hearing](#) to examine the “unequal impacts of COVID-19.”

Meanwhile, over at the White House, the President [started](#) the process of withdrawing from the World Health Organization – which immediately drew criticism from [Democrats](#) and some [Republicans](#). White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows also [suggested](#) this week that the President could soon sign three Executive Orders on prescription drugs, though the details are still unclear.

What to Expect Next Week: A handful of House and Senate Committees are expected to conduct remote hearings next week (see full schedule of COVID / other health-related hearings [here](#)). When lawmakers officially return the week of July 20, expect appropriations work to continue and expect negotiations on the next COVID response bill to pick up in the Senate. While speaking to reporters earlier this week, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) [said](#) he was “pretty sure” Republicans will release a fourth and “final” COVID-19 response bill later this month.

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Senate GOP Leadership Eyeing July for Action on Fourth and “Final” COVID Response Bill: While speaking to reporters earlier this week, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) [said](#) he was “pretty sure” Republicans will release a fourth and “final” COVID-19 response bill later this month (before lawmakers leave Washington for the month-long August recess). The details of what will ultimately be included in the GOP proposal are unclear at this point; however, Leader McConnell did stress that liability protections for businesses / health care providers / schools / etc. would

be part of the legislation. He also said another round of stimulus checks could be included, though he did not specify how much individuals and families would receive.

Looking ahead, both chambers are expected to be in recess through July 20, though it's very likely that negotiations between House and Senate Republicans and the White House will take place during this time. If / when the GOP proposal is unveiled later this month, leaders in both parties will then have to negotiate the details of the proposal before any votes take place (Senate Republicans and the White House are reportedly eyeing a bill in the range of \$1 trillion, while House Democrats' proposed fourth COVID bill – [HEROES Act](#) – was upwards of \$3 trillion). Meanwhile, at the White House, a Trump Administration official [said](#) this week that the President would like to see Congress take up and pass another COVID response bill before lawmakers leave Washington for August recess.

Senate Democratic Health Leader Releases report on Trump Administration's Response to COVID-19 Testing: Senate HELP Committee Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) released a [report](#) yesterday suggesting that "had there been competent, consistent leadership from the federal government, the United States could have avoided critical delays and better addressed supply shortages, allowing testing capacity to expand more rapidly...instead, President Trump and his Administration largely took a hands-off approach." In response, HHS Assistant Secretary for Health Dr. Brett Giroir said the lawmaker's claims "generally represent mismanagement and miscommunication at the state level."

Drug Manufacturers Developing COVID Vaccine Candidates Expected to Testify Before House Subcommittee July 21: The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations is expected to hold a [hearing](#) on Tuesday, July 21 with officials from five drug manufacturers developing COVID-19 vaccine candidates (AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Moderna and Pfizer). In a joint statement, Chairman Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Chair Diana DeGette (D-CO) said the hearing will "provide an opportunity for both Congress and the American people to hear directly from some of the manufacturers currently developing potential COVID-19 vaccines."

Trump Begins Process Withdrawing From WHO: The President [began](#) the process of withdrawing from the World Health Organization via a letter to United Nations Secretary General António Guterres on Monday. In the letter, Trump said the withdrawal would be effective July 6, 2021, though several Congressional Democrats – and presumptive 2020 Democratic Presidential Candidate Joe Biden – have criticized the President's decision to do so amid a global pandemic and have also questioned whether the President can formally withdraw without approval from Congress. The announcement also drew [criticism](#) from the Senate HELP Committee's top Republican, Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN). "Certainly, there needs to be a good, hard look at mistakes the World Health Organization might have made in connection with coronavirus, but the time to do that is after the crisis has been dealt with, not in the middle of it. Withdrawing U.S. membership could, among other things, interfere with clinical trials that are essential to the development of vaccines, which citizens of the United States as well as others in the world need. And withdrawing could make it harder to work with other countries to stop viruses before they get to the United States. If the administration has specific recommendations for reforms of the WHO, it should submit those recommendations to Congress, and we can work together to make those happen."

HHS Voices Support for Broader Telehealth Coverage: While [speaking](#) at a virtual forum hosted by *The Hill* on Thursday, HHS Secretary Alex Azar suggested that the Administration is open to working with lawmakers on legislation that would allow for broader coverage of telehealth after the pandemic is over. "Telehealth is one we've wanted to do for so long, but Congress has been unable to actually change the Social Security Act to make Medicare and Medicaid amenable to telehealth...now that's available," he said, adding that HHS plans to "do everything we can by regulation to keep the gains that we've had to put the patient, that doctor relationship, the hospital relationship in the center."

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FCC Announces Approval of Final Funding Applications for COVID-19 Telehealth Program: On Wednesday, the FCC [announced](#) it had approved the final funding applications for the [COVID-19 Telehealth Program](#), though FCC Democratic Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel expressed [concern](#) that three states with rising number of COVID-19 cases (Alaska, Hawaii, and Montana) were not provided grant funding through the program. Going forward, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said he would like for the Commission to thoroughly review how the grants were used in an effort to determine the program's effectiveness. The Commission established the COVID-19 Telehealth Program in late April to administer the \$200 million in Congressionally appropriated funding (provided under the CARES Act) to help eligible health care providers purchase eligible telehealth services and devices to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

OTHER NOTEWORTHY HEALTH-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS COMING OUT OF WASHINGTON

Appropriators Get to Work on Fiscal Year 2021 Spending Bills: Both chambers were out for the July 4 recess this week, though members of the House Appropriations Committee were in town to work on several spending bills for FY 2021 – including [funding](#) for the Department of Health and Human Services.

On Tuesday, July 7, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education voted to send its [Labor-HHS-Education](#) proposal to the full committee for consideration. The bill would provide \$96.4 billion for HHS (\$1.5 billion more than the FY 2020 enacted level and \$11.1 billion above the President's budget request). Included in that amount is \$24.425 billion in emergency spending to "support State and local public health departments, public health laboratories, and global health activities" (click [here](#) for the full department funding breakdown). A full committee markup to consider the Labor-HHS-Education bill is slated for Monday, July 13.

On Thursday, July 9, the full House Appropriations Committee approved its [Agriculture-FDA](#) appropriations bill (after the Subcommittee approved the measure earlier in the week). The proposal would provide \$3.2 billion for the FDA in FY 2021 (approximately \$40.8 million more than its FY 2020 budget). Members adopted (by voice vote) an [amendment](#) offered by Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-GA) that would give the FDA legal authority to require the recall of unsafe prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

White House Reportedly Working on Executive Orders Tied to Rx Drugs: During a Fox Business Network interview earlier this week, White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows [suggested](#) that the President would soon sign as many as three Executive Order on prescription drug prices, though the details of what would be included are still unclear.

UPCOMING COVID / HEALTH-RELATED CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

House Committee on Appropriations

Topic: House Committee on Appropriations Markup of FY2021 Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies, and Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bills

Date: Monday, July 13 at 1pm

Witnesses:

- N/A

House Committee on Homeland Security

Topic: Subcommittee on Oversight, Management, and Accountability Hearing: Reviewing Federal and State Pandemic Supply Preparedness and Response."

Date: Tuesday, July 14 at 12pm

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Witnesses:

- Craig Fugate, former Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Senior Advisor, Blue Dot Strategies
- Mark Ghilarducci, Director, Office of Emergency Services, Governor's Office, California
- Chris Currie, Director, Homeland Security and Justice team, U.S. Government Accountability Office

House Committee on Energy and Commerce**Topic:** Subcommittee on Energy Hearing: "Oversight of DOE During the COVID-19 Pandemic" (Hybrid Hearing)**Date:** Tuesday, July 14 at 12pm**Witnesses:**

- TBA

House Committee on Financial Services**Topic:** Subcommittee on Investor Protection, Entrepreneurship, and Capital Markets Hearing: Promoting Economic Recovery: Examining Capital Markets and Worker Protections in the COVID-19 Era**Date:** Tuesday, July 14 at 12pm**Witnesses:**

- The Honorable Dr. William E. Spriggs, Chief Economist, AFL-CIO, Professor of Economics, Howard University
- Ms. Anne Simpson, Director of Board Governance and Strategy, California Public Employees' Retirement System
- Ms. Camille Busette PhD, Senior Fellow and Director of the Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion Initiative, The Brookings Institution

House Committee on Foreign Affairs**Topic:** Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, Energy and the Environment Hearing: The Importance of Transatlantic Cooperation During the COVID-19 Pandemic**Date:** Tuesday, July 14 at 2pm**Witnesses:**

- The Honorable Michael Froman, Chairman, Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth (Former United States Trade Representative, Former Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economic Affairs)
- Karen Donfried, Ph.D., President, German Marshall Fund of the United States (Former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs, National Security Council)
- Rachel Ellehuus, Deputy Director, Europe Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies, (Former Principal Director for European and NATO Policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense)
- James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., Vice President, Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, E. W. Richardson Fellow, The Heritage Foundation

House Committee on Financial Services**Topic:** Protecting Homeowners During the Pandemic: Oversight of Mortgage Servicers' Implementation of the CARES Act**Date:** Thursday, July 16 at 12pm**Witnesses:**

- Ron Busby, President and Chief Executive Officer, U.S. Black Chambers, Incorporated
- Carmen Castillo, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

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- Karen Kerrigan, President & Chief Executive Officer, SBE Council
- Jenell Ross, President, Bob Ross Auto Group

[House Committee on Small Business](#)

Topic: House Committee on Small Business Hearing: Long-Lasting Solutions for a Small Business Recovery

Date: Wednesday, July 15 at 1pm

Witnesses:

- Brett Palmer, President, Small Business Investor Alliance
- Amanda Cohen, Chef and Owner, Dirt Candy (Testifying on behalf of the Independent Restaurant Association)
- Dr. Lisa Cook, Professor, Michigan State University
- Pete Blackshaw, CEO, Cintrifuse

[House Committee on the Budget](#)

Topic: House Committee on the Budget Hearing: Software Update Required: COVID-19 Exposes Need for Federal Investments in Technology

Date: Wednesday, July 15 at 2pm

Witnesses:

- Teresa Gerton, President and CEO, National Academy of Public Administration
- Jennifer Pahlka, Founder, Code for America; and Co-Founder, U.S. Digital Response
- Rebecca Dixon, Executive Director, National Employment Law Project

[House Committee on Small Business](#)

Topic: Subcommittee on Innovation and Workforce Development Hearing: Putting America Back to Work: The Role of Workforce Development and Small Business Rehiring

Date: Thursday, July 16 at 1pm

Witnesses:

- Demetra Smith Nightingale, Institute Fellow, Urban Institute
- Kelly Folks, Arapahoe/Douglas Workforce Director, Workforce Center *Testifying on behalf of Workforce Boards and Centers and the Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association (RMWDA)
- Joe Schaffer, President, Laramie County Community College *Testifying on behalf of the American Association of Community Colleges

ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCEMENTS

Department of Health and Human Services

- [Assistant Secretary for Health Admiral Brett Giroir, M.D., Statement on FDA EUA Approval of the BD Veritor Portable, Rapid Point-of-Care Antigen Test to Detect SARS-CoV-2](#)
- [Administration for Community Living's COVID-19 Resources: What's New](#)
- [HHS Awards More Than \\$21 Million to Support Health Centers' COVID-19 Response](#)
- [Remarks at White House Coronavirus Task Force Briefing](#)
- [NIH Launches Clinical Trials Network To Test COVID-19 Vaccines And Other Prevention Tools](#)
- [HHS Launches 'Surge' COVID-19 Testing in Hotspot Jurisdictions in Florida, Louisiana and Texas](#)
- [HHS, DOD Collaborate with Novavax to Produce Millions of COVID-19 Investigational Vaccine Doses in Commercial-Scale Manufacturing Demonstration Projects](#)

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- [HHS, DOD Collaborate with Regeneron on Large-Scale Manufacturing Demonstration Project of COVID-19 Investigational Therapeutic Treatment](#)
- [RIC Panel Discussion: Supporting Family Caregivers of Older Adults through Times of Stress and Isolation](#)

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

- N/A

Food and Drug Administration

- [FDA Issued Emergency Use Authorization for Point of Care Antigen Test](#)
- [Click here for the full list of all new FDA updates.](#)

Noteworthy Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- [Click here for the full list of all new CDC updates.](#)

QUICK LINKS

- [Mehlman Castagnetti's Infographics Analysis on Post-Pandemics Politics and Policy](#)
- [Additional Mehlman Castagnetti Resources on COVID-19](#)
- [Johns Hopkins University Map of Global Cases of Coronavirus](#)
- [CDC Map of Coronavirus Cases in the US](#)
- [CMS COVID-19 Stakeholder Call Recording/Transcripts](#)
- [Kaiser Family Foundation: State Data and Policy Actions to Address Coronavirus](#)

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